

FALL 2003

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VOLUME 30  
NO. 1

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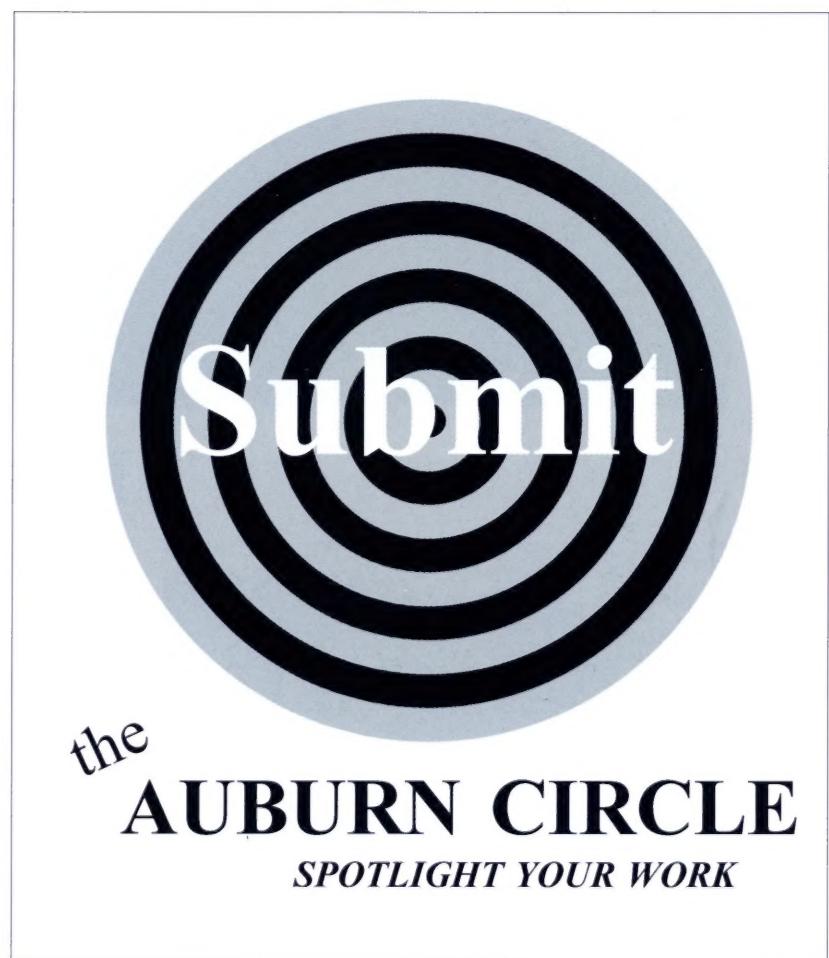
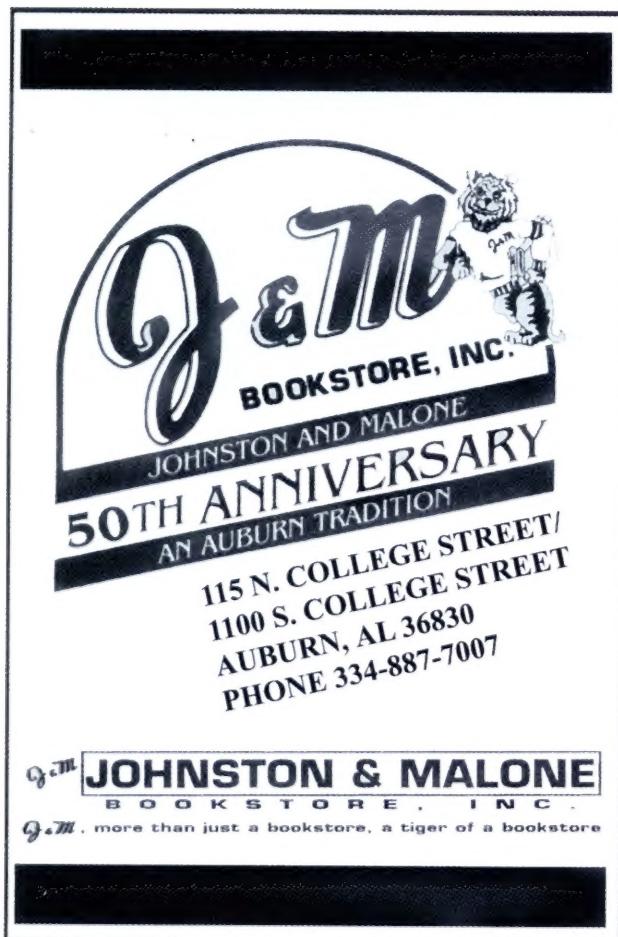
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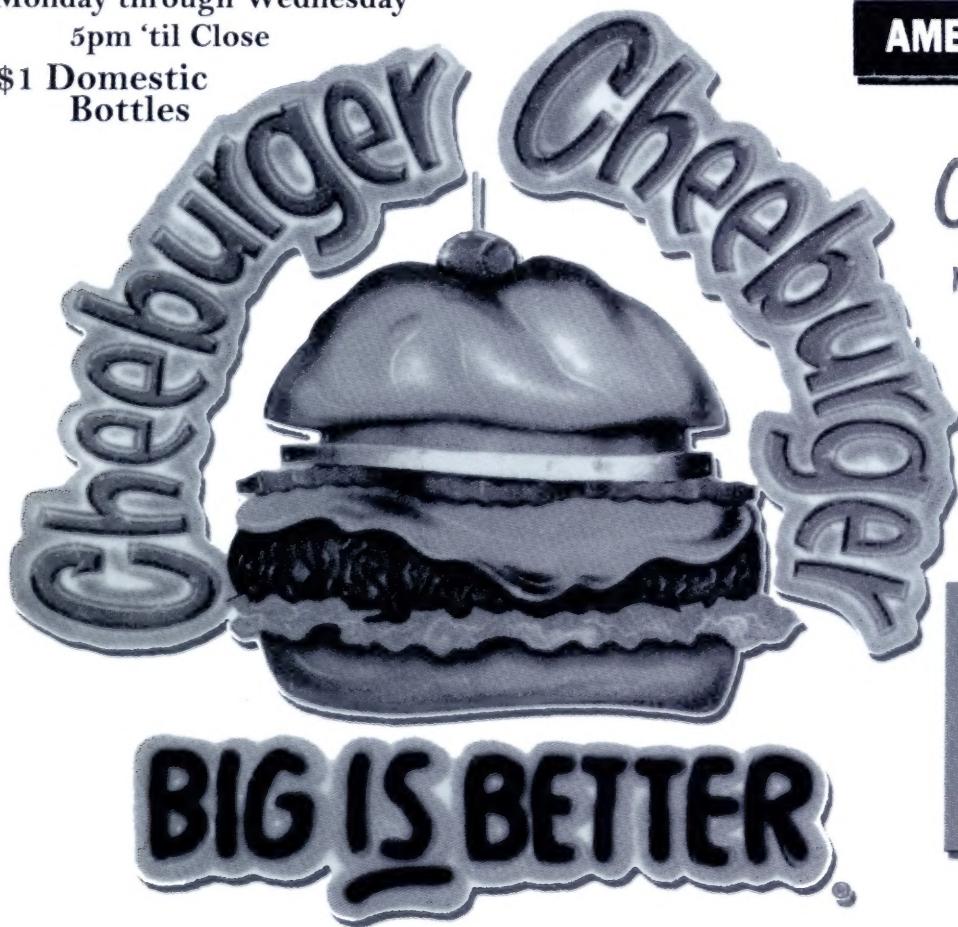




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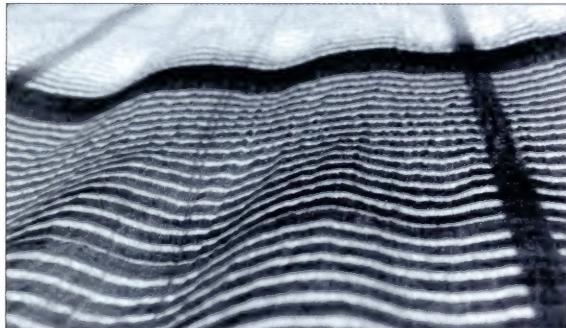
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# Contents

## Fiction



Victory Cigar .....	Michael F. Smith, 16
Time .....	Sarah Godwin, 21
Bar Lights .....	Lindsey Carmichael, 28
How Convenient .....	Walt Till III, 38
Chapter Four .....	Katherine McDonald, 55
<b>Special Feature:</b>	
Alabama Twenty Years Later: A Projection for Two Thousand	
Twenty-Three .....	Thomas E. Nunally, 50

## Poetry



Digestion.....	Anonymous, 8
Persia Moon.....	Cindy Staudt, 9
Tribal Roots.....	Bobby Dickson, 12
Mechanics.....	Kia Powell, 13
Psychosomis.....	Katie Baldwin, 13
Image of Possibility.....	Courtney Anne Mazzola, 15
My Sweater.....	Jimmy Quinn, 18
Eros Means Desire.....	Katie Baldwin, 18
Porchlight.....	Kia Powell, 19
Changes.....	Justin Lowery, 24
Snow.....	Marvyn Petrucci, 25
Buffalo in the Badlands.....	Jeremie Stanley, 30
Reverting.....	Christa Jennings, 31
Paint Me Invisible.....	Amberly Wright, 35
Hoes and Rakes.....	John F. Marsella, 40
What Hurts Worst.....	Justin Lowery, 41
The Commodity of Time.....	Jessica Lueders, 44
Scopophilic.....	Tiawanna Blakely, 45
Resonance.....	Katie Baldwin, 49
My Arid Lover.....	Jessica Lueders, 53
Waves.....	Kia Powell, 54

# Nonfiction

The W-6 House.....Lindsey Carmichael, 10  
Speed, Shocks, and  
Solar Energy.....Brooke McIntosh, 22  
The Jule Collins Smith  
Museum of Fine Art.....Matt Leach, 32



# Design

K-OS (Chaos).....James Brazelton, 36  
Untitled.....Seale, Starling, 37  
First Year Architecture:  
Caldwell, Hamner,  
Hicks, Kelley.....46-47



# Art & Photography

Frank Dillard ..... 8, 11, 32-34, 50, 51  
David Williams ..... 9, 13, 18, 25, 30,  
39, 40, 45, 54, 61  
Lindsey Carmichael ..... 10, 30  
Blake Gordon ..... 12, 17, 40, 48  
Julie Zorn ..... 13, 28-29  
Caroline Hester ..... 26-27, 41, 57-58  
Amy Owen ..... 26-27, 59  
T. Brandon Clark ..... 15, 19, 24, 35, 44  
Rolanda Gilbert ..... 18  
Brooke Bullman ..... 22-23  
Dave Baxter ..... 30  
David Plaxco ..... 31  
Miles Davis ..... 42-43  
Kay Balch ..... 43  
Andrea Benton ..... 43  
Ashley Rubenstein ..... 43  
Kelly McDowell ..... 53  
Brian Woodham ..... 56  
David Chamlee ..... 60  
Linzey Rogers ..... 62



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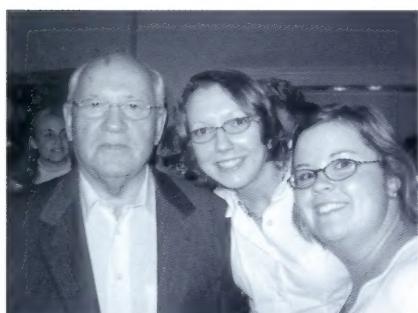
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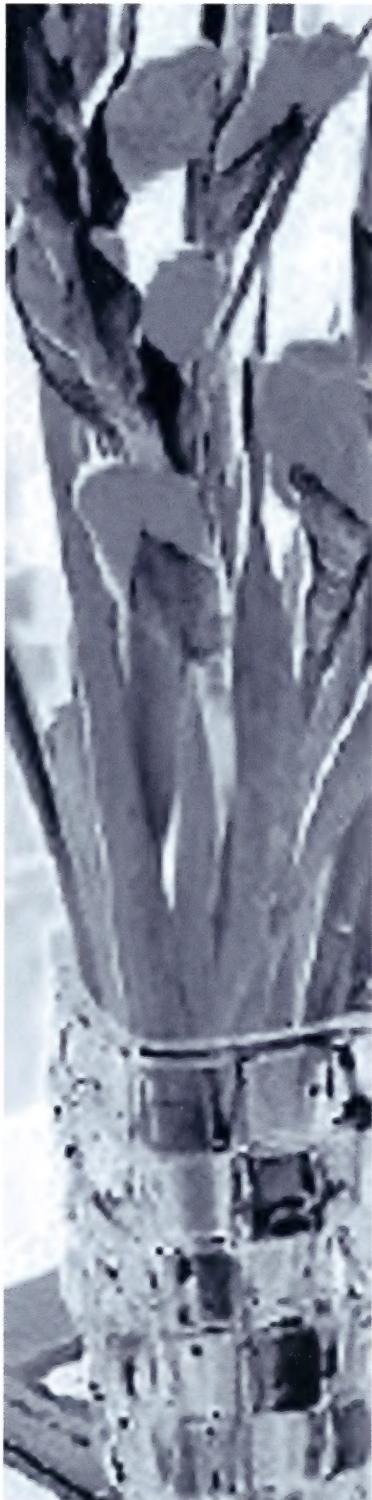
Though Auburn has been my home for the past four and a half years, it has been only in the last year and a half that I have come to realize the full extent of the talent exhibited by Auburn University's students, staff and supporting community. The *Circle* receives submissions from all of these groups, in several categories, including poetry, fiction, features, design, art, and photography. The previous editors and I have dedicated our time here at Auburn to making the *Circle* an accomplished forum to display the wealth of talents present here at our university. We at the *Circle* want to be the ones who help and encourage "fledgling writers [to] become published writers," as former editor Brooke Bullman so eloquently stated. I am grateful and overwhelmed by the superb works that you, my peers and colleagues, have submitted to the *Circle*.

I would like to thank several people who have helped make working with the *Circle* one of the best experiences that I could have asked for. First, to the wonderful people involved with Student Publications and Comm Board—Pete Pepinsky, Meredith Kincaid, Denise Anderson, Dr. Nancy McDaniel, and so many others. To my staff for teaching me about myself and what a magazine should be and for their hard work and dedication to Auburn and the *Circle*. To my students for inspiring me, and to my colleagues and professors for always encouraging me. To the English Department for encouraging students to submit. To Frank Dillard for never letting me down and always offering his creative ideas. To Brooke Bullman and Emily Cangie for making my job easier and for being truly wonderful people. To Dr. and Mrs. Walker for their generosity and for allowing me the opportunities to visit their home. And to my mother and my friends for believing in me.

To those of you who support the *Circle*, whether you submit, promote, or just read it, you are the life of this magazine. Please continue to share with us. Thank you for your contributions, and I hope that the *Circle* can continue to make you proud of your work and proud of Auburn.



Editor-in-Chief, 2003-2004



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# Digestion

Anonymous

1

Steam rollers and men with unnecessary hardhats once laid this ribbon of black sand, wound it through the maze of White Oak and Maple, sealing off snake holes and filling in 'coon tracks with black plaster. Then out spread the parking lots—each pedestal scored from the cold Alabama clay and frosted with routing icing; they reinforced the hillside with decorative flagstone, the cheap stuff, Quickrete for mortar. Up went pavilion roofs on pine supports painted red ochre, shade for sorority picnickers, or cub scout jamborees.

Company's comin' next week to dam the creek, I hear. Make a swimmin' area—there'll be a waterfall, too.

2

When the trucks rolled out they left the erected skeleton lying like some felled dragon's bones splayed upon the hillside—an inorganic husk the Oak roots and patient shoots of wild grass now spend timeconsuming

*Photo by Frank Dillard*



David Williams

# Persia Moon

Cindy Staudt

I was better than that,  
And those gossiping old women—  
those gossiping old birds—  
they never understood  
that I was good.  
At least, at first.

I was so young,  
a blue cotton dress snapping in the breeze,  
and my fond mother watching  
from the garden.

Then dark horses grew from the horizon,  
black clouds rolling across a field,  
burning a path straight towards me.

He was at the lead,  
dark and handsome and terrible.

He caught me with one arm,  
and I was flat on the earth,  
a hand pressing against my thigh,  
and I chose not to be myself for awhile.  
After, the darkness touched everything:  
the sun fell down,  
the earth was grey and cold,  
ice grew on my heart.

From above, I could hear my mother  
wailing in her burnt brown garden,  
tearing at her weeping eyes

with a scrap of blue  
still clutched between her hands.

I was so young  
and so foolish  
that I bound up my life  
in the flesh of a pomegranate.  
Six and six is less than nothing,  
my husband handsome dark and terrible,  
my heart ice,  
my eyes dry pools,  
my ivory thighs forsaken on a field of green,  
a blue dress,  
a mother calling to the sun and moon,  
and tears and tears and tears.

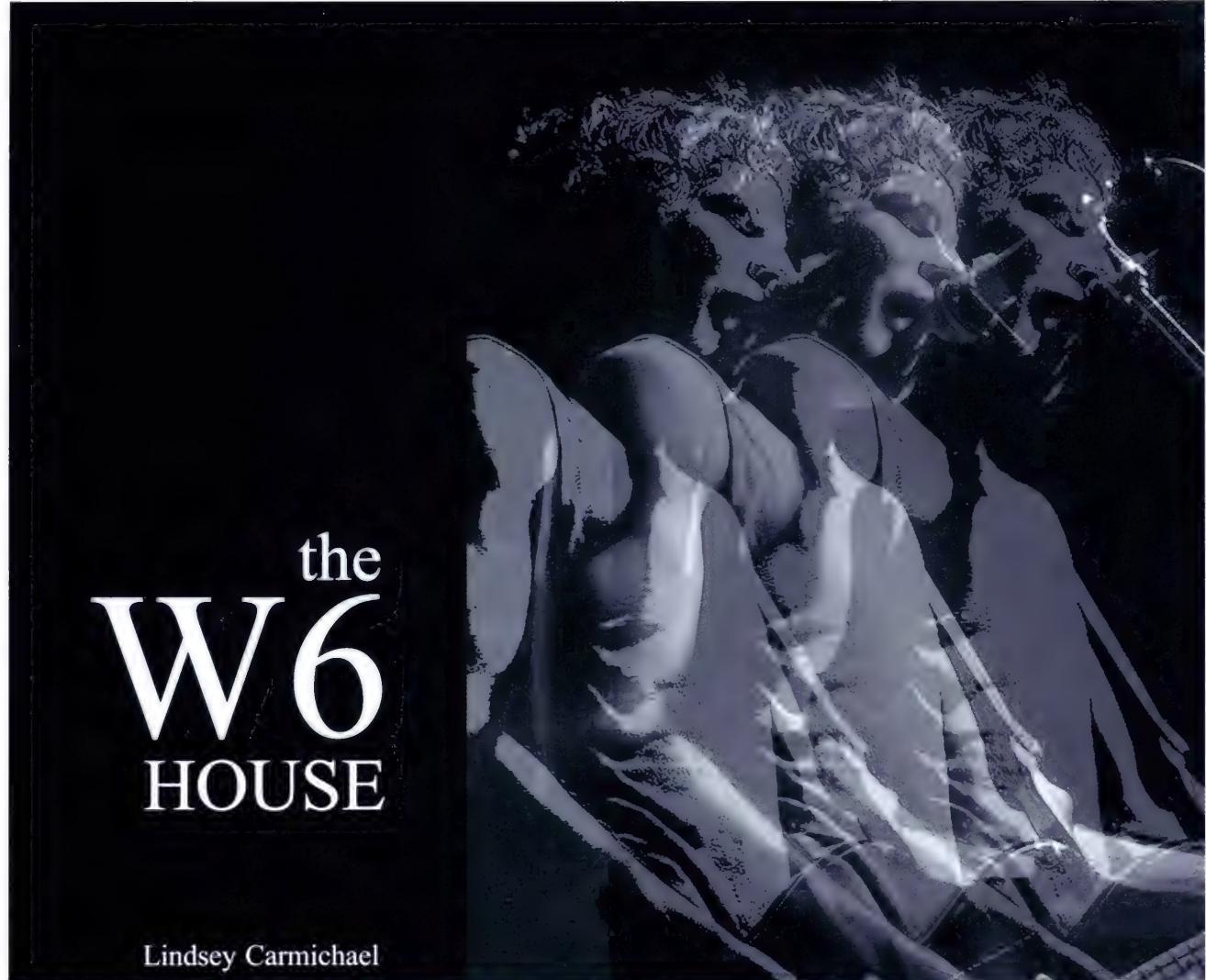
On the vernal solstice,  
I emerge  
and even my mother  
doesn't know me anymore.  
My heart is ice,  
my lips stained red,  
my fingers lost in their motions,  
my thighs unburdened and bruised,  
my mouth full of mint in bloom.

I don't even know myself.



# the W6 HOUSE

Lindsey Carmichael



Lindsey Carmichael

In the hot white daylight of an Alabama afternoon, the house that sits at 146 West Glenn Avenue appears unremarkable. It's a modest white duplex, fronted by a small porch and a lawn that slips down sharply to meet the busy lanes of traffic. Two tiny squares of reflective lettering, the kind that can be bought at Wal-Mart in the home improvement section for pennies, are fashioned into a makeshift sign that's stuck up above the front door.

With the advent of the weekend, the house undergoes a remarkable transformation. The

W6 becomes a living, breathing animal. The windows exhale clouds of cigarette smoke and the front lawn becomes a sea of bodies and abandoned beer bottles. Inside the house, the air grows hot with expectation. The long central hallway becomes lined with kids smoking and talking, leaning against hastily painted murals and fliers advertising past shows. The bathroom is painted red, red entirely, and it never has toilet paper, unless necessity has indeed become the mother of invention and someone stole some from the gas station across

the street.

This is the house known as the W6. If someone didn't tell you where it was, you would probably never find it. Some say it's Auburn's last gasp at an independent music venue. It's a house that's as infamous as it is anonymous. An all-encompassing venue, there is no dress code and there is no industry standard to which the patrons and performers subscribe. Kids skirt the three busy lanes of traffic in jeans and Chuck Taylors, climb the front lawn in fishnet stockings and knee-high boots, and wait in line

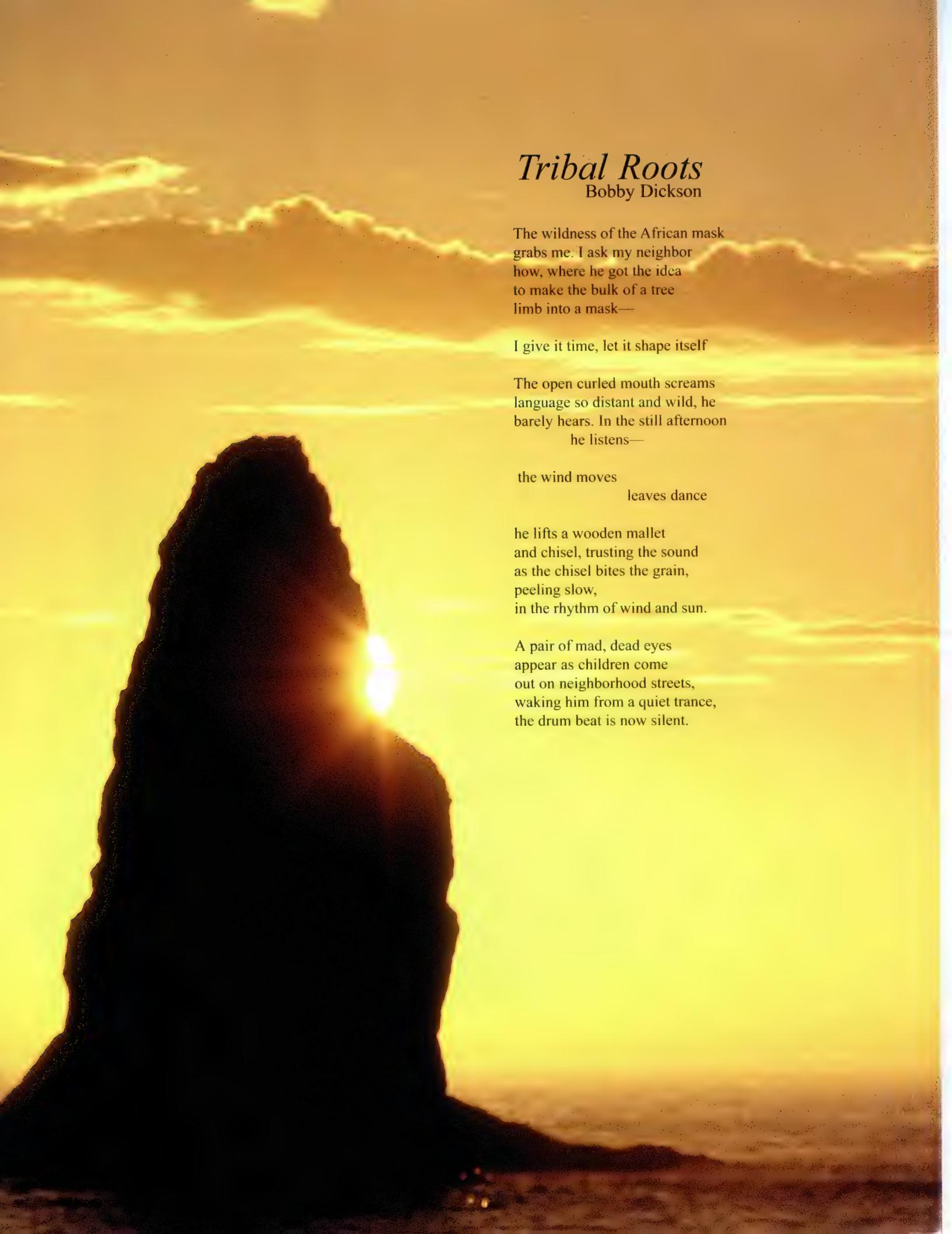
wearing baggy shorts and Doc Martens. Hardcore, scene, emo, metal, dance: it's this strange amalgam of Auburn's student body that creates a steady stream of traffic and keeps the Auburn rock scene humming.

The house is no frills and strictly DIY. The shows are booked by whoever happens to be renting the house at the time. Bands like Polyvinyl's Rainer Maria, label mates of Thursday and My Chemical Romance, have loaded in their instruments themselves. Trailer Bride of Bloodshot Records has set up and sound checked by the light of a single strand of white rope lights. After Del Cielo's set, their drum kit and amps were carted out in much the same fashion. The house is standing room only, forcing the crowd to sometimes spill out onto the stoop or into the kitchen, and a minor cover donation is usually encouraged, but not required, and is taken up at the door by friends.

Where other DIY venues in Auburn have failed, the W6 has continued to thrive. There's no accounting for their success, other than a laid back atmosphere and all encompassing audience. Their publicity is mostly word of mouth with the occasional flier posted on campus or downtown. The bands are local, regional, and sometimes national, coming from as far away as New York City and Connecticut, but all share the common denominator of being small unknowns hoping to gain some kind of grass roots following through touring.

There's no set time for when the show begins, and that's true for when the show ends. The kids slowly trickle outside, standing in small groups and talking about papers or social gatherings still hanging in the balance. People brave the traffic on Glenn, climb back into their cars, and head home, that single strand of white rope lights is still hanging in the balance.





## *Tribal Roots*

Bobby Dickson

The wildness of the African mask  
grabs me. I ask my neighbor  
how, where he got the idea  
to make the bulk of a tree  
limb into a mask—

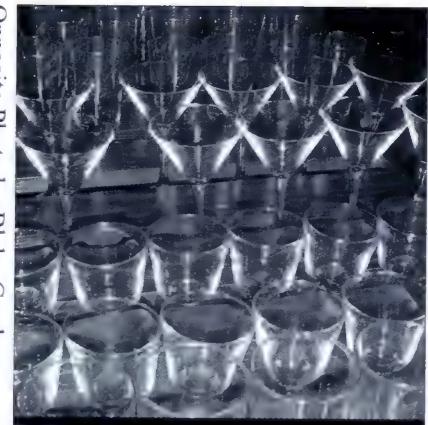
I give it time, let it shape itself

The open curled mouth screams  
language so distant and wild, he  
barely hears. In the still afternoon  
he listens—

the wind moves  
leaves dance

he lifts a wooden mallet  
and chisel, trusting the sound  
as the chisel bites the grain,  
peeling slow,  
in the rhythm of wind and sun.

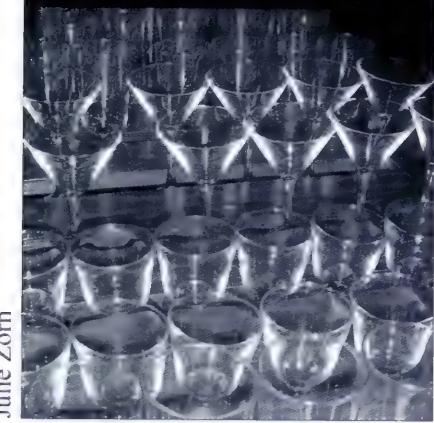
A pair of mad, dead eyes  
appear as children come  
out on neighborhood streets,  
waking him from a quiet trance,  
the drum beat is now silent.



## Mechanics

Kia Powell

Love  
is not a dishwasher  
the daily dirtied  
and used privileges of love—  
those trusts  
and that hope—  
can't be rinsed off  
and tossed into a machine  
to be pounded clean  
by the lemon-fresh detergent of  
time  
or a rush of hot water.  
Love  
is not mechanical,  
and though some amending  
energy  
exists,  
undetected,  
no pots-and-pans presoak  
setting  
will polish hope  
or scour trust  
until they shine.



Julie Zorn

## *Psychosomis*

Katie Baldwin

he grew tired of illness  
chafed at the burden of flesh  
and kicked off the dust  
of the corporal earth—  
left to go a-wandering

—yes his mind, it went a-wandering  
across the midnight sky

it was sudden  
finding his body slumped sideways in the hall  
his face to the half-open window  
devoid of the conscious soul

blank as slates  
washed with rain  
the tired lines leaving their trails;  
escaping like his mind

his thoughts  
they went a-wandering in the night  
sought out the dreamtime  
with wild and shuttered eyes

perhaps when the wind comes  
bringing back the rain  
the echo across the wilderness  
the dark and verdant thoughtlessness  
will carry with it his name.





Caroline Hester

# The Image of Possibility

Courtney Anne Mazzola

Stranded in blinding winds,  
stinging grains of isolation  
the shadows that grip and sway  
all sense of direction

For days it swirls, breath of hell,  
possessive, powerful torment  
through echoes of defeat, a plea for release,  
oppressed, splintered independence

The potent weight that shuts my eyes,  
struggles to shatter sight of self  
all swelling, cold, desperate,  
tears in the arms of emptiness  
I call for a sign of life-  
come dance with my ghost

He puts me through these moments  
of panic and famished reaching  
then softly reveals,  
beckons with graceful light  
the presence I forgot  
when I reached into the unknown

Now steady and calm,  
delicate and guarded,  
as with the fall of everyday  
Self is Him  
peace awaiting  
a soul manifested in the image of possibility



# *Victory Cigar*

Michael F. Smith

Marshall had brought a box of cigars anticipating a hall full of well-wishers, but the only men there were his father-in-law and sixteen-year-old cousin. He opened the box and handed them out, the father-in-law saying "I don't smoke" and the kid being warned not to by his mother. Marshall walked to the end of the hall and lit his cigar, then looked out of the window into the hospital parking lot.

"You can't smoke that in here," a nurse said behind him.

"We just had a baby girl," he said.

"You have to go outside," she answered.

He got on the elevator and it stopped on the third floor. A doctor in scrubs walked on and said, "You can't smoke that in here."

"I know," he said and tried to hold the cigar where the doctor could see the pink band around the middle of it.

He was the only one with a cigar in the smoking area outside. The concrete benches were full and the smokers ignored the kids that ran around in circles. The cigar was dry and it hurt to inhale.

"I just had a little girl," he said to a man on a bench. The man was reading the newspaper and he looked over the top of it at Marshall. He nodded to the stream of kids running by.

"I'll give you two more if you like," he said and went back to the paper.

He wanted to stamp out the cigar but felt like he was supposed to finish or jinx the birth, so he waited and waited while the cigar burned slowly and his head began to hurt.

He put it out when it was a nub and went back upstairs. In the room, Elizabeth was holding the baby and the mother-in-law and sister ooohed and aaahed over the still red flesh of the newborn head.

"Where have you been? We've been looking for you," Elizabeth said and the sister rolled her eyes.

He held up the nub of the cigar.

"You can't smoke that in here," she said and he turned and put the cigar in the garbage and saw where someone had tossed the entire box in the bottom of the can.





## ***My Sweater***

Jimmy Quinn

You have a sweater of mine.  
It's my sweater.  
I've lived in that sweater.

It's made of cheap material  
and poorly stitched.  
My smell once danced  
among the threads  
and now it is yours  
that resides in it.

You wear it when you're cold.  
when you miss me  
when you are tired of me  
and when you don't like my sarcastic tone.

When I think of it  
it's you that's in it  
asleep; curled next to me.  
It's my sweater.  
It's my favorite sweater.



David Williams



## ***Eros means desire***

Katie Balwin

I lie in a squalor of my own meaning  
The glimmering in hand,  
Silently topaz.  
Nothingness comes in a lead-glass  
tumbler—  
The beautiful poison.  
Its cool finger tracing a flame down  
my throat.  
Echoing you.  
Echoing you.



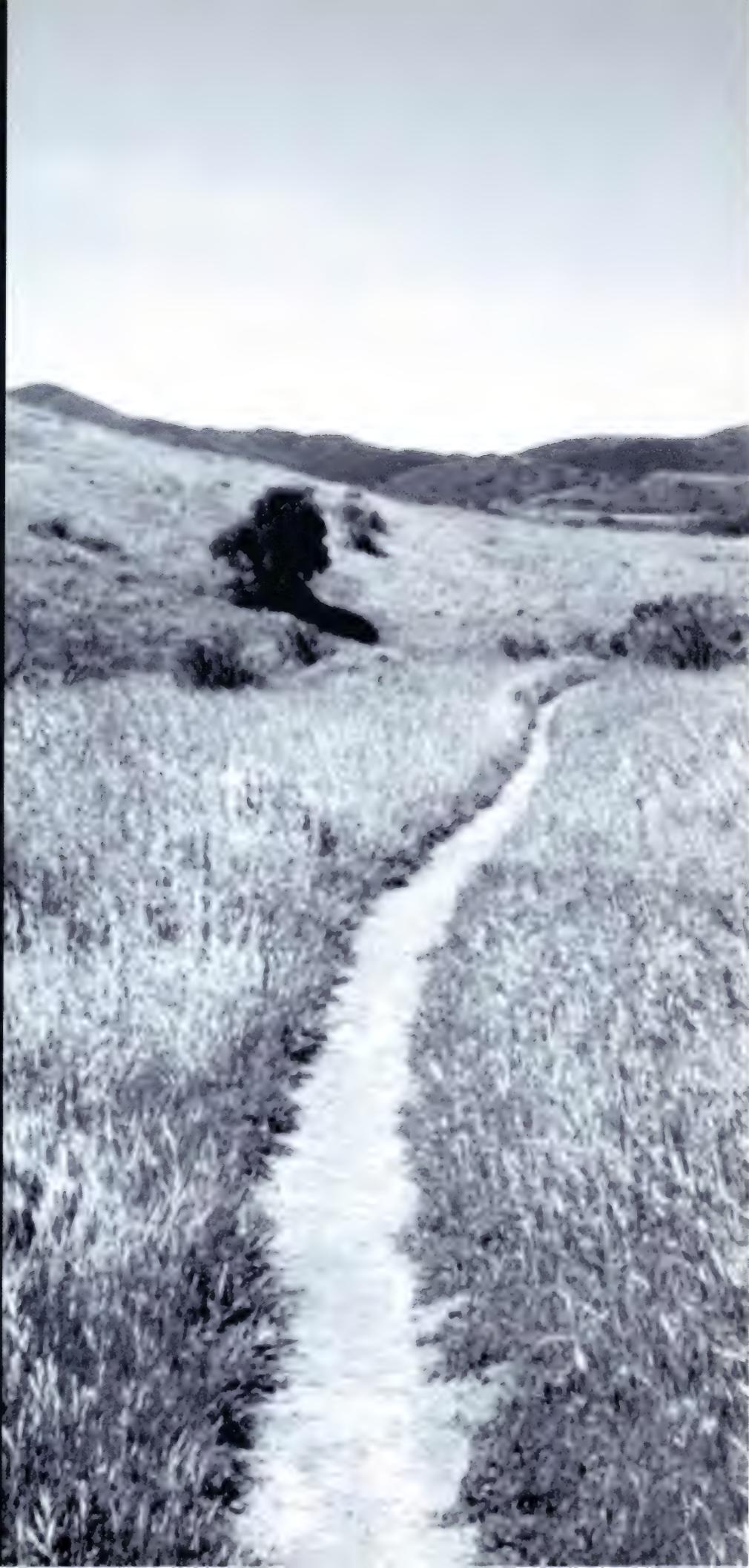
Roland Gilbert



# *Porchlight*

Kia Powell

Talk of exes  
on a midnight porch,  
in a college town,  
and, whether we were in  
or out of school,  
here we sat  
in plastic furniture  
at an old house,  
complete with a porch swing  
and the notes from guitars,  
drums—  
the college band,  
half-serious,  
half-amazing,  
and inspired—  
notes that floated  
around from the kitchen window  
at the back of the house  
past the clapboard siding,  
the three of us realizing  
suddenly  
we were women—  
through love,  
Johnny Cash songs,  
each other,  
the sweating bottles of beer,  
and the stranded cigarette butts  
flicked to the driveway.  
We've grown  
through those relationships,  
the ones we tried to forget  
and couldn't,  
and still the notes  
move through the night,  
accenting our laughter  
or the way we question ourselves  
as the orange glow of dying butts  
fades under the porchlight.





David Chamlee

# Time

Sarah Godwin

She's been up for three hours. The kids left at twenty-seven minutes past seven—coats on, lunch boxes held, backpacks shouldered, homework finished before dinnertime yesterday. They each had filed out the door for a fresh hug and kiss. The eldest sidestepped the kiss, the middle shrugged off the hug, and the youngest missed both entirely to catch up with waiting friends. She waved to their backs until the glazed eyes on the baby's teddy bear backpack were through the doors of the bus. She looks at the clock in the playroom. The smiling moon winks at her while the cow creaks past the hour mark. The spoon was supposed to be hugging the fork, but it had broken off five minutes after the clock came out of the box. The lonesome spoon followed the cow across the shiny nose. 8:01. Too early to eat lunch. Much too early.

She walks into the kitchen. The dishes are still in the sink from breakfast—pancakes, eggs (scrambled and sunny side up), biscuits, and sausages. They were supposed to be rinsed and placed in the dishwasher. She rinses them and sets them neatly into rows in the dishwasher. Having done that she looks at the clock in the kitchen. The mouse, ever chasing the piece of cheese, circles the open mouth of a cat. 8:34. Still too early to eat.

The pantry could stand to be rearranged. She opens the double door pantry and stares at the cans and boxes. The rows stare back—evenly stacked with labels facing outward and separated by color from red to violet in a rainbow pattern. Last week they were alphabetical. She shudders...because of the draft...and closes the doors. She starts making lunch. She places the freshly rinsed dishes from making lunch into the dishwasher. The stir-fried chicken with steamed vegetables and a rice pilaf sits untouched in the refrigerator covered with an unwrinkled layer of plastic wrap. She sits on her bed, careful not to disturb the sheets or stretch the tight corners. Staring into the mirror across the room, she analyzes her features until she sees phantoms of her dead relatives appearing in the corner of her cheekbones and the curve of her lips. She looks at the clock. The cherub's arrow intersects the heart every hour then chases it around again. The arrow still has far to go. 11:14.

She looks in the mirror again. Raises her eyebrows and pouts her lips. With one hand she pulls her hair up, letting strands fall seductively in her eyes. She holds the pose a second longer than she should. Finally she lets her hair fall and she sits a few moments with her hair hanging over her face. The rank buzz of the dryer jars her. She folds her clothes and places them in tight piles of white socks, white underwear, solid shirts and pants. She softly tucks each item

away, except for the staccato beat that plunks her white underwear over the hint of bright purple with black lace shoved in the back, tags still attached. Time for lunch.

She stands in the kitchen, staring out the window. While she lifts food periodically to her mouth she plans the evening meal. Seafood. He always likes shrimp and the kids like baked fish. Too early to start though. The clock, that has "Home Sweet Home" written across it, hangs in the living room. 12:35.



Frank Dillard

# Speed Shocks & Solar Energy

*Story and Photos by  
Brooke McIntosh*

Auburn mechanical engineering seniors Jim Ray and Charlie Ping don't just care what's under the hood—they want to know how the whole car is put together. Ray, from Pelham, and Ping, from Anniston, are members of Auburn's Formula SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) racecar team. Team members build an open-wheel racer for autocross style competitions, fabricating and customizing nearly all of its parts. "People would be surprised what we're capable of," says Ping, the 2003 team captain.

The Formula team is one of four racing teams that comprise Auburn's War Eagle Motorsports, located within Samuel Ginn College of Engineering. Each team designs, builds and races their car. The Auburn Mini Baja team and the Lady Tigers Mini Baja team race rugged yet mechanically sophisticated all-terrain vehicles. The Sol of Auburn team races a highway cruiser that runs entirely on solar energy.

In May 2003 Auburn's Formula car joined the winner's circle in the FSAE competition held in Detroit. Out of 140 university teams, Auburn placed

fifth overall, navigating through tight curves bordered by traffic cones on autocross style courses. Thanks to its Motor City success, the team is headed for this year's FSAE Australasia competition in South Australia December 4-7.

When asked what drives their dedication to the car, Ray admits, "We've got an addiction, I guess." They explain that it's about excellence, engineering, teamwork, and support. It's how Ping felt when he pulled up to a third place victory at the end of the endurance race. "At that point, we knew our car was competitive with the best schools out there," he says.

War Eagle Motorsports dominates off-road competitions as well, with robust, all-terrain Mini Baja cars. These cars are wider, longer, and lower than traditional ATVs, have a full roll cage, and sophisticated steering and suspension. What's it like to drive the Baja car? "Fun!" says Lady Tigers co-captain Brittany Consuegra of Selma, Ala. "Yeah, we engineer fun," laughs Darrell Krueger, a senior in mechanical engineering from Roswell, Ga.

But the Auburn Mini Baja teams engineer more than that. These ultimate ATVs tackle rocks, ditches, debris, even water.



Quality engineering and strategic design paid off for the Baja teams in this year's events. Out of 49 university teams competing in the East competition in April, the Auburn Mini Baja team placed first in design, repeating that feat—this time out of a field of 149—in the June Midwest competition in Troy, Ohio. "We don't take the easy way out. We take all of the [design] paths and see which one is best," Mini Baja co-captain Krueger says. The Lady Tigers also impressed design judges in Troy, placing eighth. "At the end of the day, we weren't fixing major things on our car," says Consuegra, a senior in mechanical engineering.

"Some teams were rebuilding their cars overnight."

Meanwhile, back on the open road, the Sol of Auburn solar car raced 2,300 miles in 10 days along old Route 66 from Chicago to Claremont, Cal. in July's American Solar Challenge. The car's electric motor feeds off



of lithium polymer batteries recharged by solar cells—744 of them—placed atop the 19-foot car. Sol of Auburn placed 12th out of 31 teams, surpassing prestigious universities such as Stanford and Georgia Tech.

You can be sure the Sol of Auburn turned heads on the highway. Auburn's car has style, with its aerodynamic hood, Auburn Tiger Eyes detailing and bubble-shaped cockpit. The students also factored driver comfort into their design. The semi-reclining cockpit seat comes complete with a fan, communications radio and cruise control. Team captain Chris Trueblood, a senior in electrical engineering from Huntsville, says, "Auburn's car looks and feels more like a real car than competing solar cars."



After hours of engineering and miles of racing, Sol of Auburn was a complete educational experience for its team members. Driver Vince Moody of Mobile, a junior in civil engineering, says, "It's one thing to read a book. Doing it means more."

Members of all of Auburn's racing teams echo Moody's comment. All of the gains of War Eagle Motorsports add up to engineering confidence and experience for Auburn students. Ray sums up the experience, "I think we can do anything."





# Changes

Justin Lowery

Unbrushed hair, dirty face, and grimy hands  
I proclaim, "Girls are gross and I'll never like them."  
I run away and find sanctuary in the fort built in the gully  
Between the two fields just behind my house.

My feet dangle as I inch across the cracked vinyl  
Seat cover. Apologies for throwing mud  
At her the day before rush from my mouth  
In the typical fashion of a seven-year-old boy.

Sitting in the movie theater where my older brother  
Dropped us off. At the time I thought it was my first real date.  
All I can remember about the movie is that it was half way  
Over by the time my hand touched hers.

I drove over to her house and we watched *Life is Beautiful*.  
When it was over she walked me to my battered, blue civic. A moment  
Of awkwardness before I started the longest relationship  
I had ever had. We dated for a month.

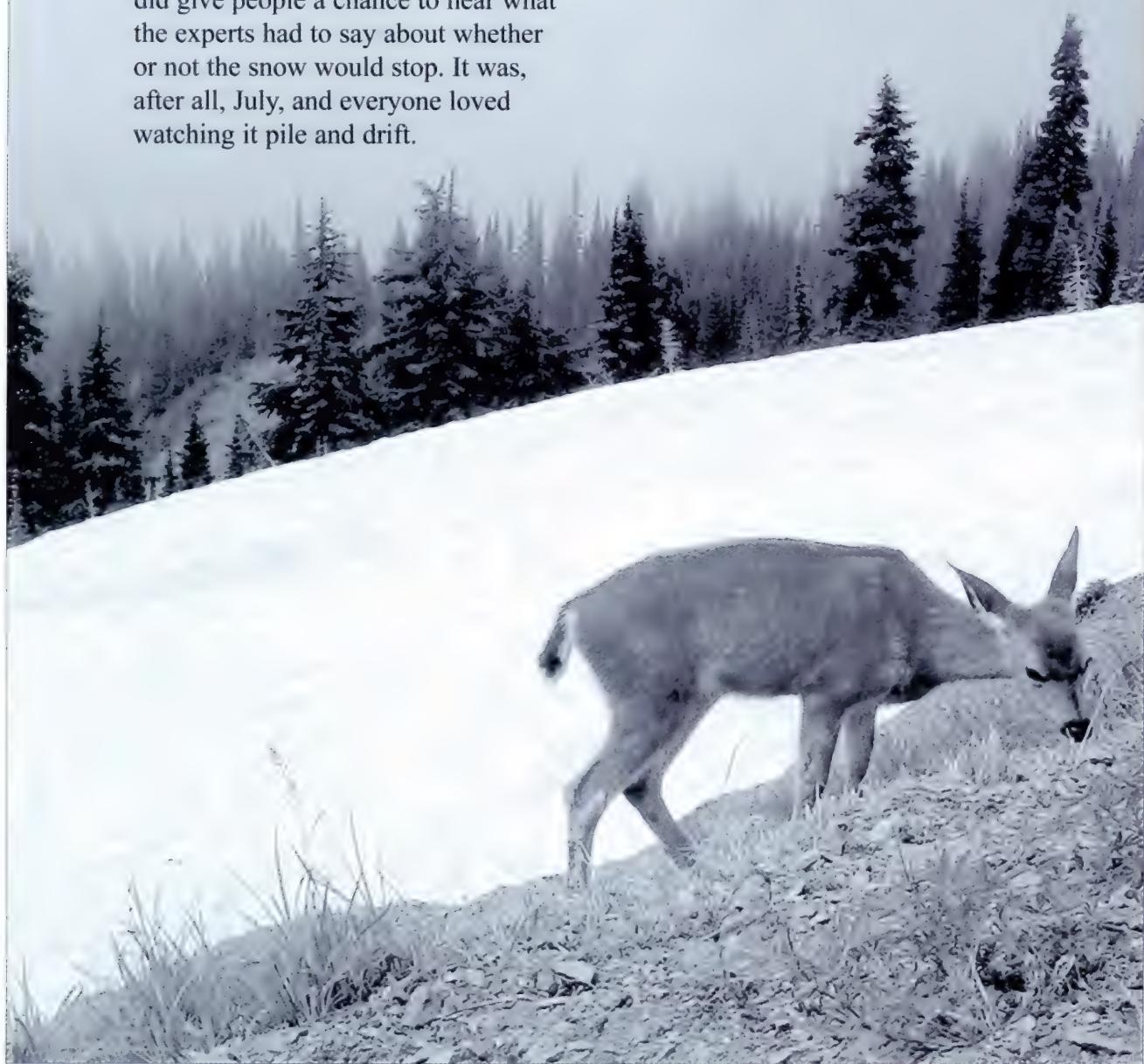
Standing at the altar in front of everyone I know,  
Watching the most beautiful woman in my life  
Walk towards me. With a promise to cherish,  
I grow up.

T. Brandon Clark

# Snow

Marvyn Petrucci

SNOW BLANKETS STATE the paper said,  
but it was my doing. I had to get back  
to the way it was. I brought a child's  
snowsuit to my tailor and asked him  
to make one like it, my size.  
I zipped up my suit in the woods,  
wished hard and snow fell for me.  
One must be careful with this kind  
of influence, I see that now, but I  
did give people a chance to hear what  
the experts had to say about whether  
or not the snow would stop. It was,  
after all, July, and everyone loved  
watching it pile and drift.



David Williams





**SOAR**

(334) 106-2483

**WINDS AND STORMS  
OF GOD (THUNDER-LIGHTNING)**

**ISAIAH 57:11-13**

**FOR THOSE WHO ARE  
THROSTALL HAVE NO FEAR  
FOR THIS IS THE DAY**

**06 B'HAM-232-DAY**

# Bar Lights

Lindsey Carmichael

He sees her at the bar. He is waiting for his girlfriend. His girlfriend is late. She's always late.

Sara is wrapped inside a long pink scarf. She sits on a stool, chain smoking. She has an entertainment newspaper lying on the sticky wood and she scans the pages slow, turns the pages slowly. She's drinking gin martinis with extra olives and he watches her motion to the bartender for another. She eats the olives first, pulling them off their toothpick with her fingers and then putting them, gin soaked, into her mouth. There are 3 empty glasses lined up in front of her, toothpicks lollygagging against the sides. She has on red pants and her button up shirt is almost painfully white in the dimness of the bar. It's fastened carefully and with an air of haste, and the pearl buttons that strain against her breasts tease his eyes in the darkness.

The cuff of his sleeve is wet with snow. He sticks the wool into his mouth and sucks away the excess. His bottle of beer waits awkwardly, half-full and half-forgotten. Undressed, its shiny paper label lies in desolation among the ashes of his cigarettes.

She slides off the stool. She fishes around inside her pants pocket and extracts a quarter so shiny and new that it winks at him, even in the dim bar light. She sticks the quarter deep inside the gut of the jukebox. She plays some Whiskeytown. *Easy Hearts*. Every song is his favorite. She returns to her bar stool. Her scarf is long and it trails off, wistfully dusting the sticky bar floor. He moves to pick it up. She smiles as she accepts his offering, and her teeth are white and perfect and straight, a gleaming row of pickets dividing her red and curving lips.

"Seat?" she offers, gesturing at an empty stool with her cigarette.

He accepts. He perches uncomfortably on the edge of the toughened leather and folds his arms across his chest. She makes him nervous. Automatically, he thinks about kissing her. Her hair is shiny and black and spreads like ink into the collar of her shirt.

"Fancy meeting you here," he says desperately. "It's all he can think to say. His mouth is filling with saliva. He knows she smells like vanilla.

She nods and fishes again into her glass. "Surprise, surprise," she replies through a mouthful of olive. She ducks her head in embarrassment and laughs. He laughs, too, a second too late.

"Are you home?"

"Only for a visit," she says resolutely. "Just for a weekend."

"Oh."

"Are you – do you live here still?"

He tells her yes. "With my girlfriend," he says, self-conscious and dutiful. "She's late."

She smiles again and he feels his face grow warm. He hopes she doesn't notice. "Girls often are."

"You never were," he says, almost involuntarily. He hates himself.

"I know." She brandishes her cigarette and waves it dismissively in the air. "It's a thing. I don't like to be late."

"I know."

She gestures at the bartender. "Drink?" she asks him. He orders another beer. They wait in silence.

"You stopped writing," she says finally, not looking at him.

"I know."

"I hated you."

"I know. I didn't really like myself much either."

"I never hated anyone before. I'm sorry it had to be you."

"It's okay," he allows. "I deserved it."

"You most certainly did," she agrees. She lifts her glass, but doesn't drink, pressing it against her lips instead. Absently, she bares her teeth and bites the rim.

He takes a cigarette from his shirt pocket and lights it. He puts his elbows on top of the bar. The bartender brings his beer over.

"I'm getting married," he says, but doesn't look at her.

"Do you love her? Are you in love with her?"

“Yeah. Sometimes.”

“Is that enough?”

“It’s enough. She loves me. She wants it. It’s something I can give her in return.”

They are quiet for awhile. He drinks his beer and she plays with the ends of her scarf. He watches a boy feed a dollar into the jukebox. The bartender flirts with three girls in short skirts.

“What’s she like?”

“Different. She’s not like you. She’s nothing like you.”

“How? Different how?”

“She has blonde hair. She teaches first grade. She’s chronically late. I gave her a Louis Vuitton purse for Christmas. I’m sure of her.”

“Sure of her?” she repeats.

“She’s not going to leave. She doesn’t have some grand plan. There’s just her and me. I’m not an afterthought.”

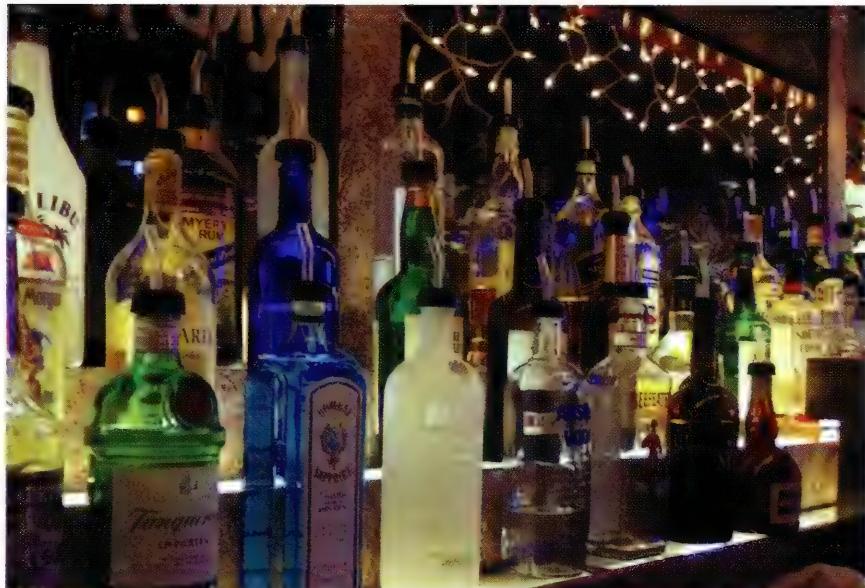
“You were *never* an afterthought.”

“I felt like it. I felt like it so I stopped writing. What’s the use?”

“But I loved you.”

“And I love you still,” he waves at the bartender for his check. “But I guess that’s my tough luck.”

She begins to collect her things. He helps her shrug into her coat. It’s black and an empty wool arm flails out in her haste and sticks to his sweater sleeve. She pulls a few bills from her wallet and lays them on the bar between her empty martini glasses. He hastily fishes some singles from his front pocket and drops them onto the bar. He



Photographs by Julie Zorn

leaves his coat and hat at his table by the door and follows her out into the night. He struggles to match her stride, calling her name as he dodges the couples and crowds. Together, they swim upstream against the flow of Saturday night foot traffic.

“Sara,” he calls. “Sara! Fuck! Sara stop!”

She does, abruptly, at the steps of City Hall, and stands in the middle of the sidewalk without turning around. He catches her sleeve and swings her around to face him. The wind is blowing her black hair into her face; it sticks to her cheeks.

“I’m sorry, ok?” He can’t think of anything else to say. All the blood has drained from his brain, his face, his body, and has collected behind his ribs. His stomach hurts. “I’m sorry. I’m stupid.” He laughs a little and hates himself. His laughter hangs in the cold air, waiting for the wind to come and lift it up into the night.

“I don’t love you anymore,” she says finally. “Well, I mean, I probably do, but I’d never admit it to anyone.”

“That’s okay. That’s good.”

She plays with a button on her coat, buttoning and unbuttoning. “I’m leaving tomorrow,” she tells him.

“Can I have your number?” he asks. “Can I call you?”

They stand together, a rock in the middle of a briskly flowing stream. People divide and separate, moving around them only to move back together once safely on the other side.

“I don’t have a pen,” she says, almost apologetically. She lifts up her feet and allows herself to be carried along by the current, down the street and away from him.

He stands alone at the steps of City Hall and watches her float away.





Lindsey Carmichael



Dave Baxter

## Buffalo in the Badlands

Jeremie Stanley

When I saw him in Yellowstone  
he was merging with the traffic  
that spoke with a power-tourist dialect,  
all saying the same thing:  
Making-good-time-can't-stop-now,  
while their words became the burden  
that he carried through the low growl  
of their big engines. In the Badlands  
he was America and I fell in love.

The desert made him a mythic creature,  
a god taking on the head and haunch  
to seduce an innocent virgin. He was

playful there, trying to roll in the dirt  
next to my tent, but unable to round

his own back. I used all of my film  
trying to capture the thing I had found,  
but all that I have are pictures of a buffalo

in a cloud of dust—the ancient god,  
America is gone. He must have gone back,  
like me, to learn the new dialect.



Dave Baxter



David Williams

# *Reverting*

Christa Jennings



A black rose  
Hovers before my eyes.  
Despair and loss,  
Alone and afraid  
I have lost so much.  
Everything dear to me,  
Everything I was certain of,  
Parts of myself,  
All is lost now.  
Depression and tears fill me,  
Empty inside.



Filled with joy,  
Smiles and laughter  
That have not come for so long,  
Now return to me.  
I find myself.  
Bits of the certainties come  
back,  
My dear one, I have gained so  
much.  
Happy and no more alone,  
Gladness and recovery  
Before my eyes,  
A yellow rose.





# *Jule Collins Smith* Museum of Fine Art

Matt Leach

Auburn's campus houses one of the southeast's greatest treasures, and I'm willing to bet that not many students are even aware of it. Now I'm not talking about us having one of the best looking campuses in the South, because we are all aware of that whenever we take a stroll down College Street on a cool fall day. I'm also not talking about our stadium, as awe-inspiring as it is to any fan of college football.



No, I'm talking about the newest and quite possibly one of the most important additions to the Auburn campus: the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, I can most assuredly tell you that you've already seen it. It's that "strange" looking building on College Street right before you hit Kinnucan's. You know, the one with the jagged edges and modern look that sits accompanied by that pond you

and your friends like to walk around. If you've been by it at night then I definitely don't have to tell you about it. The sight of the museum lit up is a piece of art in its own right. Now that you're all with me on what building I'm talking about, I'll tell you how such a gorgeous home of fine art made its way onto a campus that practically lives and dies by college football.

The actual planning for the museum started as far back as 1992, when plans for the construction of a Visual and Performing Arts Center at Auburn had first been conceived. That same year philanthropist Susan Phillips of Brewton, Alabama agreed to donate one of the southeast's largest collections of John James Audubon prints. She had acquired the collection from her grandparents, David Brent Miller and Louise Hauss Miller. Ms. Phillips continued her generosity with the museum project when she and her brother,

Allen Phillips, authorized the Louise Hauss Miller Foundation to grant Auburn an additional \$1 million to care for the Audubon collection and for the construction of galleries built for the continuous exhibition of selections from The Louise Hauss and David Brent Miller Audubon Collection. By 1997, the university had acquired nearly \$1.7 million in building funds. Those funds were practically doubled when, in February of 1998, a Houston businessman by the name of Albert Smith contributed \$3 million to the museum project.

An interesting fact about that donation is that it was inspired by what many great works of art are inspired by: love. Smith donated the money as a gift to his wife, Jule Collins Smith, for their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. At the groundbreaking ceremony Smith made his motive for the donation known. "As we approached our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I began searching for a fitting tribute to this kind, loving, very intelligent, Christian wife and mother. I

wanted something that would be both lasting and would benefit others, and I knew the latter would mean more than anything to her."

After gathering the proper funds, the university immediately enlisted the help of Paul Rudolph, retired former head of the Yale University College of Architecture and one of Auburn's most noteworthy architectural graduates. Everything was in place when, in 1997, Rudolph suffered from incurable lung cancer and was unable to work on the project and manage his health at the same time. In November of that year the university hired Gresham, Smith and Partners to help with the design, and everything was in place...again.

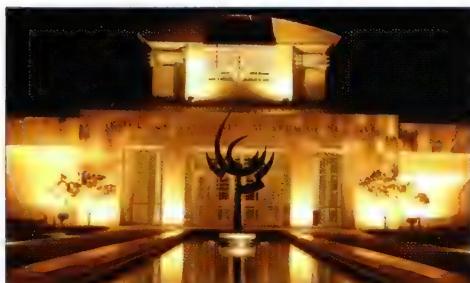
After various site moves in 1998, the final home for the museum was found. Located at the corner of College Street and Woodfield Drive, the site holds nearly 20 acres of land and sits just beyond the main campus. In January of 2000, Dr. Michael De Marsche was appointed the Founding Director of the museum, and through his efforts, the museum created a program that extended into the Auburn community. The museum membership goal of 1,000 members by museum opening on October 3, 2003 was exceeded

with more than 1,300 members and counting.

Now that you have a proper idea of where the museum came from, allow me to let you in on a little secret. Auburn University is home to what many have labeled as "the art bargain of the century." It was just after World War II when the U.S. State Department organized a traveling exhibition of 117 oil paintings and watercolors by many of the most well known artists working in America at that time. The whole event was created to help promote the growth of American culture in the post World War II era, while keeping Communism at bay. The irony is that once the paintings were shown, many people objected to the images they portrayed. The exhibition, which went by the name "Advancing American Art," had in fact offended many people in the American public. Many critics said the paintings were "a bunch of junk" that had been created by a "lunatic fringe." Harry Truman called the pieces "merely the vaporings of half-baked lazy people."

After the events surrounding the collection reached a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, it was said that the works were evocative of Communism. What hurt the

All Photos by Frank Dillard





exhibition even more is that many of the painters had belonged to Communist organizations. The collection was seen as a secret plot by Moscow to implant subversive Communist propaganda into American culture. The collection was later suspended, and the paintings were recalled. The pieces went into a warehouse where they waited to be sold as government "surplus property." The interesting point is that tax-supported institutions such as state universities were eligible to receive a 95 percent discount on all government property with the magic little word "surplus." Bravely, Auburn University acquired 36 of the so-called "Communist" paintings, and it got them for the small sum of \$1,072. Flash forward to 2003, where the paintings have been estimated to value somewhere close to \$10 million, and there you have the "art bargain of the century."

Many works in the "Advancing American Art" collection represent some of the finest pieces from such artists as Georgia O'Keefe, John Marin and Ralston Crawford, to name a few. The museum will serve as the collection's permanent home as well as the home of many other amazing works of art. Other highlights include the French Masterworks from the Harbert Collection, including Renoir, Dali, Picasso, Chagall, and Matisse; a massive mural created by Auburn alumnus William Baggett depicting the daily life of Auburn University; and an incredible three-tiered glass chandelier by Dale Chihuly that was commissioned specifically for the museum. And of course I must not forget one of the Southeast's largest collections of Audubon paintings. With so many things to see, the museum is a treasure of the South and sure to attract people to the Auburn area. I envision a day when a couple takes a trip down here to Auburn on a Saturday afternoon, and they haven't got the slightest idea that a football game is going on. They cruise right on through the sea of orange and blue and into the home of a piece of modern art history. War Eagle.



## ***Paint Me Invisible***

Amberly Wright

paint me translucent  
so that wickedness  
aimed in my direction  
will travel straight through me

dye me shades of transparent  
so that you can feel my spirit  
and not judge me from my  
outer appearance.

cover me with thinner  
so that I will dissolve away  
into air and live freely  
without deceitfulness

tint me impossible to see  
so that I will be hidden  
from treachery and deception  
and hatred can't find me.

paint me invisible...



T. Brandon Clark





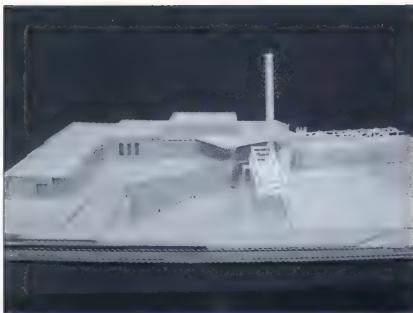
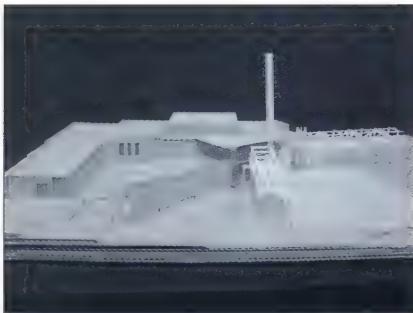
These images by James Brazelton, a senior in Interior Architecture, were created on a computer. He then used Autodesk VIZ, a computer modeling program, to manipulate the images.

“Honestly, it was an attempt to manipulate digital form. The way in which the virtual light plays against the virtual material was simply a ‘happy accident.’ The shattering of the light against the form was visually intriguing to me. The forms that are able to be generated with this technique seem to be infinite.

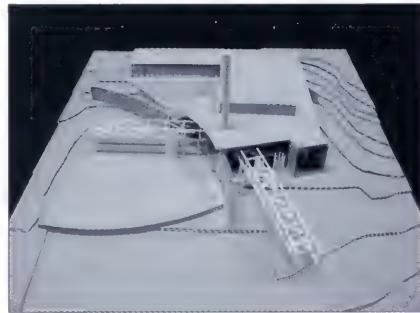
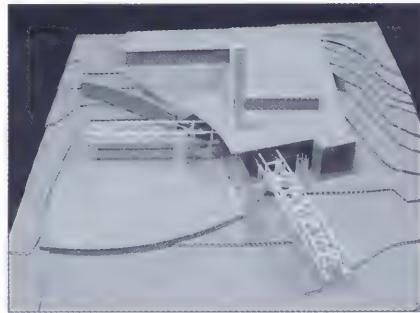
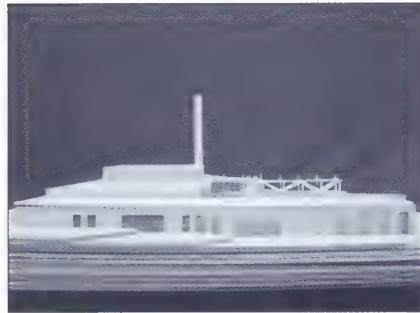
Although not true 3-d form, spaces can be conceived.”

“The light is really just reflecting off of the metal material. It was a side project that I started during the summer, but I am attempting to use it within my studio designs currently,” Brazelton said.





A Spring 2003 Steel Competition asked students to design a Performance Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee to include a theatre, theatre support areas, administrative space, and education space. A model of a design proposal by Marley Seale and Monica Starling relates to the site's cultural attractions and circulation patterns while responding to the city's Riverwalk. It features a steel footbridge that invites visitors from the riverside and the Tennessee Aquarium.



Monica Starling

# How Convenient

Walt Till III

She shouldn't have been there. She shouldn't have stayed so late at her friend Megan's, then she wouldn't be running behind to pick up her brother. She wouldn't have felt guilty about stopping for a drink, and she wouldn't have met me. But she did. She stayed that extra 10 minutes to talk about Bruce, the cute new guy from Geology and she ran into that convenient store for a refreshing drink to cool her from the hot south Florida sun that on that day could have fried an egg. We did bump into each other as we scanned the big silver fridges full of tasty beverages and I did find the largest lump in my throat when I looked up.

I told her I was sorry as she looked up at me through sun kissed strands of blonde hair that had escaped the pull of her tortoise shell sunglasses. She smiled, but looked me straight in the eye, without a blink or a blush, not embarrassed or the least bit scared. As she rose from picking out the luckiest Dr. Pepper can in the world she lifted her spaghetti strap back onto her shoulder, hiding her tan lines from my guilty eyes. How I longed to flick the strap back off her browned shoulders. The way

the baby pink contrasted with the light coffee colored flesh was enough to make me drop my Coca Cola I had picked out. That shoulder was magical.

The can hit the ground and exploded. The fizzy, cool drink shot all over her thin legs and flip-flops. My jeans were soaked as well. I wondered if she would even speak a word or walk right out without looking at me again. I stood breathless, not able to apologize, crack a joke, or much less move. She spoke first. She said 'damn'. It was the most beautiful spoken word I have ever heard. The way it escaped her lips so quickly. It was almost as quick as her turning and walking towards the fountain drinks where the napkins were kept. Suddenly, I was able to speak, and I did so without stopping as I apologized over and over again, repeatedly saying I was a fool, and that I was sorry that I had been so clumsy. She never frowned, or made any face for that matter; all she said was that one word. Damn.

It was what I was thinking too. How could I turn this into anything good? This princess was worthy of a prince and she was given the pauper. All of a sudden, an idea struck me out of nowhere. What if I asked her out? What's the worst that could happen? I had already made a fool of myself.

So I did it. I ran up to her as she was walking out of the convenience store and asked her if there was any way I could make it up to her. I couldn't see the reaction in her eyes because of

her sunglasses, but I was so glad she wore them. I didn't have the nerve to look at those baby blues. And anyways, even if I could have seen her eyes I don't think I would be able to look directly at them. They were like the Florida sun. If you looked directly at it, you were blinded for a few minutes afterwards. She had the same kind of effect.

She didn't seem taken back by my proposition and when she let 'what' and 'time' slip off her tongue I almost died right there at the age of eighteen. But I was too young to die, and now had so much to live for. I stuttered, or maybe just hesitated, I don't know which because it's all blurry now, just as it was then. I told her six and she smiled. I decided she liked the number six and that I would forever remember six o'clock as a holy time. It was a sacred time in history. She then said her name was Christy and that she was sent to save me. Actually she just said her name was Christy, but you know what I was thinking. Then she leaned threw the window of her Nissan Maxima and reached for a sharpie marker and I fumbled around in my pockets for a piece of paper. Out of nowhere she grabbed my hand and wrote her phone number across it. I watched in awe as she wrote. Five, six, one, four, four, one, nine. I was thinking of asking her to put the area code on there, not because I didn't know it, or would need to dial it, but because her cool hands on mine felt like heaven. Yes, for me this was heaven.

I thanked her, said I would call and she only smiled. I turned and headed back towards my black pickup truck walking on air. Yes, it was damn near like walking on air.

At 4:47 I called the number she had given me. Two voices answered almost simultaneously. One belonged to my angel; I recognized it. The other was mean, rough and almost scary sounding. I asked for Christy, and she said "I got it dad" and I heard a phone hang up. She said 'hey' with all the enthusiasm of a kid at the park. I was so excited that she was excited that I blurted out my 'hey' back with even more enthusiasm. She quickly told me that her dad wasn't fond of dating, she told me her address, and she told me to come a few minutes early, because her dad would want to talk.

I did exactly as I was told, and when I rang that doorbell I had no idea of the giant I was about to meet. Six feet and seven inches of pure muscle and bone stood between my prize and me. How in the world was I going to get past this? I said hello and told him my name, in fact I told him all of it. "Michael Pierce Cate, but my friends call me Mikey," I blurted out. I was nervous as hell and he knew it. He led me inside, told me he was just a little busy but could chat for a minute. Cleaning his gun could be finished a bit later. I tried to hide my fear but if you saw how big he was, you would realize there was no place to hide fear, he

could find it anywhere you hid it. Christy did most of the talking, on account of the fact that I had no idea what our plans were and even if I had, I wouldn't have been able to speak to this monster of a man in front of me. She had the whole thing planned out.

Dinner, movie, ice cream, home by twelve. Sounds good to me I thought. Her dad finally consented to our outing and we were out the door by 6:04. As we pulled away in my truck I couldn't help but steal glances at her every chance I got.

That night was the most thrilling night I have ever known. We never saw the movie, and if you can consider Wendy's drive through with a Frosty, dinner and ice cream, well then, I guess we did do those things. But that night was the first night I ever spent with a girl, and the next morning when the sun rose up, I was awakened by little kisses on the lobe of my right ear. Lying in the bed of my truck, she whispered 'listen'. All I heard was the buzzing of insects, but listening



closer I could here the radio, still tuned into the classic rock station, still playing classic love songs. I heard Springsteen on that sweaty summer morning and then I listened to the words of that song on the radio.

"Someday girl I don't know when we're gonna get to that place Where we really want to go and we'll walk in the sun But till then tramps like us baby we were born to run."

Photo by David Williams





David Williams

# Hoes & Rakes

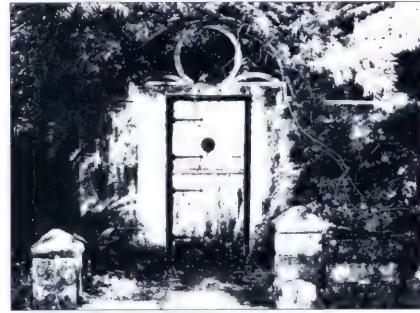
John F. Marsella

I.

Abandon the naked dirt in all its humility;  
Expose fertile ground with spikes scraping fallen leaves.  
Tines, loosen up the virgin soil, till the frigid land.  
Rake-spines, prick her moist, loamy flesh.  
Indifferent whether the field lays fallow or births crop,  
Leave the rutted earth to sprout the planted seed.

II.

Waste no time in moving from this mound to that.  
Find weeds in beds of brightly colored flowers  
And spread wide the crease in your rich soil.  
The furrow cleft and germ perhaps sown,  
Strike out at a new bit of prickly bramble;  
One row complete, the next awaits the hoe.



Blake Gordon



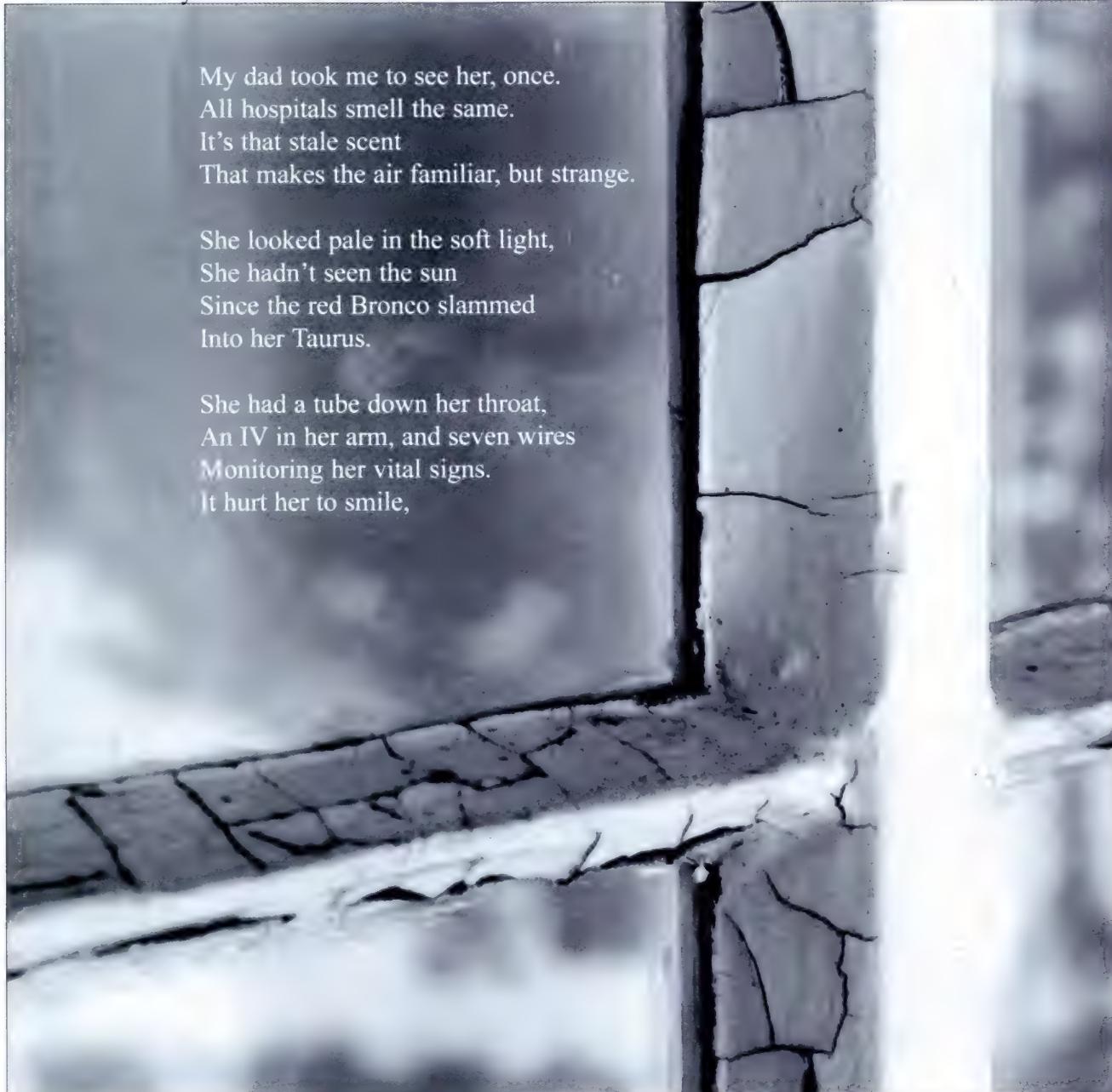
# What Hurts Worst

Justin Lowery

My dad took me to see her, once.  
All hospitals smell the same.  
It's that stale scent  
That makes the air familiar, but strange.

She looked pale in the soft light,  
She hadn't seen the sun  
Since the red Bronco slammed  
Into her Taurus.

She had a tube down her throat,  
An IV in her arm, and seven wires  
Monitoring her vital signs.  
It hurt her to smile,

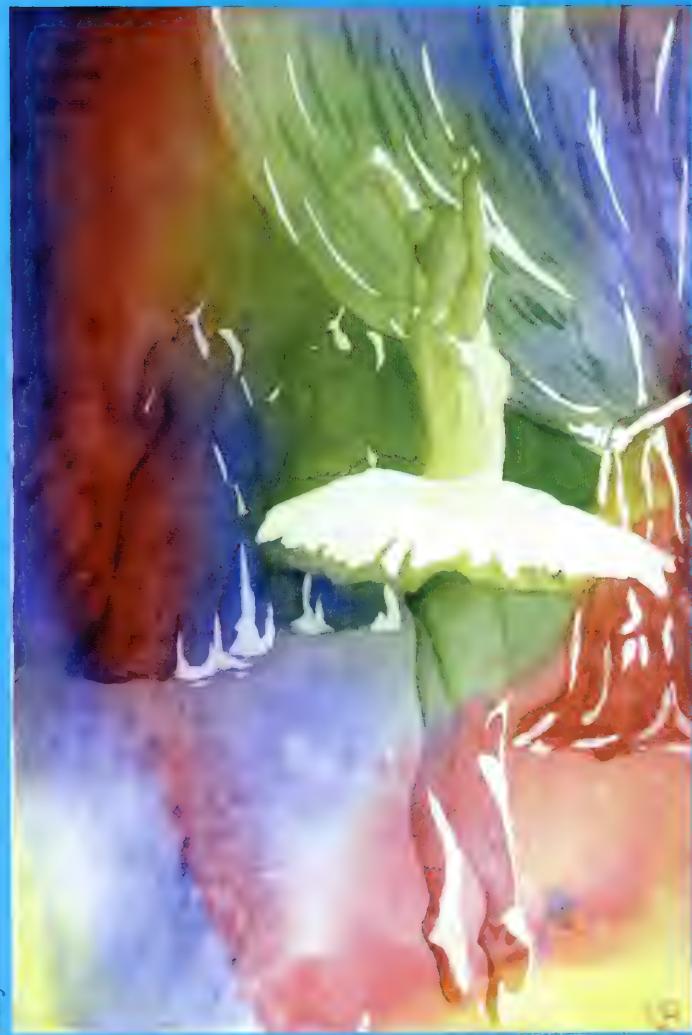


Caroline Hester





Opposite and Top Right by Miles Davis



Miles Davis



Ashley Rubenstein



Andrea Benton



# The Commodity of Time

Jessica Lueders

My PDA is a spider web of hours, appointments woven in grey lines linked on a computer green attest to conflicts of priority and minutes. Don't assume my

Kate Spade and CK provide calm hours with the click of Jimmy Choos and Sprint beeps. Donna Karan frames my frenzied battles scheduled against pages and printers

rather than half hour sitcom increments while preparing for the future as a proficient student. My bagged eyes are painted by Clinique and Max Factor; debt isn't precious

like the semi-stones below my manicure. Five more years and I'll find my Gekko, reach epiphanies in penthouse galas while contracts and memos litter my skyscraper office. Now

I market me when the alarm clangs, and three hour naps at 2 a.m. appease my fingers to reach for the keyboard. Caffeine in pint frappuccinos, ephedrine tabs; my stock exchange for finals.

Don't ask about my future when I hand you my Visa. Soon I'll be with financial aid, snorting powdered Ritalin and Camel Lights while Mr. Jones hands me a check, and I hear the turn of my Tiffany watch against the tennis bracelet I got on sale.



T. Brandon Clark

# Scopophilic

Tiawanna Blakely

Everyday I go through the same routine  
Trying to catch a glimpse of him.  
That soft chocolate skin.  
Velvety locks, twisted and tinted  
I wish he could see me  
I could be me with him  
He gives a grin.  
The creases of his face look like trails of laughter  
And I would love to have to be in his world.  
Just the thought of being his girl.

Every muscle on his frame has been kissed by my dreams

And y'all know I could never miss the signal

I stay full of steam

I can smell his passion when the wind blows

He glows but only I can see

Everyday I contemplate about the glow in me

Wishing I could wear my emotions on my sleeve but

They're written all over his face.

And sometimes I trace the lines of his eyes so hazel, so brown

I dive in every time.

I am swept away when he smiles.

And then I could count the lashes that accent,

And his body is orchestrated like wet pavement,

I would be convinced he was a prince of thieves that stole hearts then gave them back.

Naw baby, I don't want mine back.

Every night I would rewind the day

To pause the frame and marinate

I walk up to this brother eye to eye

And let my tongue commence to play.

I'd serenade his ears with flaming verbs and cold words

I'd lace his lips with sweet nouns and butta conjunctions

Then if it was cool we could do a little sumthin, sumthin

But to him I am only an admirer.

That basketball chick that make sure she speak, "Whassup, how you doing?"

But the imagination cannot please the impulse.

My heart thuds and the entire union can hear it.

I wake up and realize I've been staring at this brother for ten minutes.

What else but his magic had me hypnotized

I felt the vibe in between my thighs, I wanted to go to him I tried I tried my best

But my quest was misguided- the sexual attraction is strong and I can't fight it

But I'd rather have this brother to confide in

Every time I see him I want to eat his fire become pregnant with his love

Give birth and grow wilder.

Please give me a minute to speak my peace.... Whassup, how you doing?



David Williams



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# Architecture Projects: *Drawing Machines*



Photos by Rusty Smith

*"In a sense, every tool is a machine—the hammer, the ax, and the chisel. And every machine is a tool. The real distinction is between one person using a tool with their hands and producing an object that shows at every stage the direction of their will and the impression of their personality; and a machine which is producing, without the intervention of any particular individual, objects of a uniformity and precision that show no individual variation and have no personal charm. The problem is to decide whether the objects of machine production can possess the essential qualities of art."*

Sir Herbert Read, *Art and Industry*

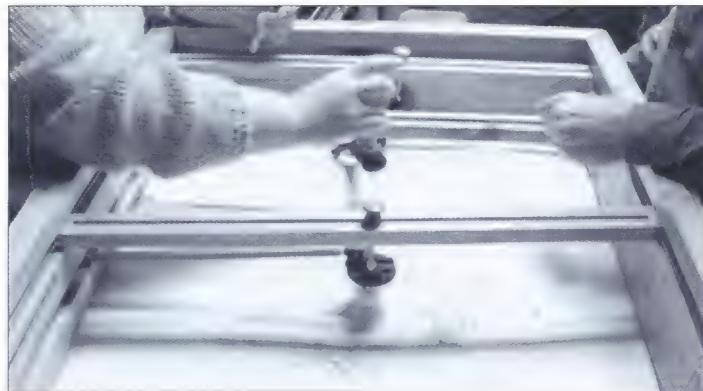
Can an ordinary machine that we use in everyday life create a work of art?

That is what the first year architecture students set out to discover with this assignment. Finding ordinary appliances, like typewriters, hairdryers and fishing reels, these students innovated ways for these instruments to "draw."

Blake Hicks chose to use a hair dryer for his drawing machine. Hicks attached piping to the appliance so that it would direct air to a stream of paint onto a canvas (see below). As the paint drips from the upturned bottle, the force of the air from the hair dryer pushes it onto the canvas creating a work of art.



Jennifer Hamner uses her reassembled fishing reel for her drawing machine. After placing the mechanism with a wooden structure, the fishing reels “draw” on the paper that the machine sits on.



Kait Caldwell chose a typewriter for her drawing machine. Each letter on the typewriter contains a wire that is attached to a wooden structure with several eye-hooks. The wire is looped from the letters to markers dangling from the wooden structure over paper. When a key on the typewriter is pressed, the corresponding marker then moves, creating a work of art.

In the detail below, Caldwell's markers “dance” on the paper, creating a colorful masterpiece.

Though not pictured, Stacy Kelley used a fan as her drawing machine, to create similar works of art in this First Year Architecture Project.





# resonance

Katie Baldwin

i like the sound of my earrings—  
the clitter-clatter of striking shell.  
i fiddle with them when i'm not thinking,  
bobbling my head to hear the noise.  
On some days  
(when i feel adventurous)  
i wear bells and shake them all day long.

some people are bothered by me  
they get upset  
and call me simple

i don't really mind it,  
i've been called lots of names.  
just so long as they don't call me stupid;  
momma called me that when she was angry.  
(i was always worthless.)  
the words stung my cheeks  
and burned great welts across my ears,  
leaving to hover indelible promises  
of misery  
buzzing ever so slightly out of hearing.

Photo by Blake Gordon

## Alabama Twenty Years Later: A Projection for Two Thousand Twenty-Three

Thomas E. Nunally



Frank Dillard

It should have been a happy time, one of the happiest of our lives. Our daughter, Shawna, had just graduated from Beaumont High, and our son, Jay, had recently graduated from Middle Alabama State. Shawna had been applying to well-ranked colleges in near-by states, and Jay had been interviewing for jobs in Georgia and Tennessee. Now we had gathered together on the fourth of July, 2023, to enjoy Independence Day.

Independence Day! What a joke. A cloud hung over our celebrations, and the best ribs, melon, and televised fireworks couldn't cheer us up. Jay had dragged in the night before with his tail between his legs. After he got several interviews for good jobs in Atlanta and Nashville, he went to visit each company with confidence in his abilities. But his interviews were a disaster. And his sister, Shawna, had been crying for two days over the letters of rejection she got from every out-of-state college she applied for, even those she visited..

We served our plates and said grace, but the four of us sat watching our ribs grow colder

and colder. We just couldn't eat feeling like this. How could our wonderful children, right here at the edge of their adult lives, face such heartache?

"What happened, Dad?" Jay asked. "At every job visit I felt like I did OK talking to the Human Resources Director, explaining my desires and discussing my background, showing I could do the job. But when he or she took me around to meet other folks in the company, the same thing happened over and over again. I'd get introduced to somebody, and they'd say, 'So you're from Alabama, huh?' and then they would actually laugh out loud. Nobody went on to offer me a job. What's wrong, Dad, why are they doing this? It's like being from Alabama is the kiss of death."

Shawna, near tears, piped up with a similar tale. "It's happening to me, too, Jay. I wanted to go to school in Mississippi, Tennessee, or Georgia, but the schools won't take me seriously. I know my high school didn't have enough teachers or books, much less high-tech stuff, and I know my

classes didn't prepare me well for the SAT and ACT entrance exams, but I thought I'd have no problems getting into a good school with my grades almost all A's and my extracurricular activities. What a mistake! One admissions counselor—I was so embarrassed I wanted to die—even said to me that A's from Alabama high schools didn't count the same as A's from schools in other states. He said, 'Maybe it'd be better if you just stayed in Alabama, where the colleges are used to Alabama students.' Dad, Mom, what's wrong with us, why did they treat us like that?"

For 20 years, Maureen and I had been hoping against hope that this horrible day would never arrive. But I guess it was time for us to face the facts of our two-decades old mistake.

Maureen spoke first. "Jay, you were just two and won't remember, and Shawna, you weren't even born, but back in 2003 our state got a new governor at a time of deep financial trouble. I mean it was so bad that programs barely getting by were going to receive even less. Governor Riley

warned about the situation and what had to be done. He actually thought most Alabamians would understand the sad condition of our state and how it would just get worse unless there was a big change in the revenue system. You see, Alabama, even back then and for decades before that, had its crazy tax system. Like today it taxed poor people more with high sales taxes, even on food, and state income taxes kicking in at under \$5000 a year income. On the other hand, just like today, Dad and I paid practically nothing in taxes on our house and lands compared to neighbor states. And some people, big timber companies and mega-farms, paid hardly any at all.

“Well, this Governor Riley, bless his heart, worked out a tax-increase plan. The state legislature even voted to let the people of Alabama vote on it on September 9, 2003. It’s true that the new taxes looked huge on paper, but actually they would have helped Alabama’s middle income and poorer people and made things a lot fairer. For instance, you know those acres and acres of pulpwood pines we pass on the way to church? With Riley’s plan the company that owns them would’ve paid maybe twice as much taxes but still much less than it would pay for owning the same amount of land in Georgia. It was an exciting time, remember Fred, because this new program wasn’t just another band-aid on old problems but a promise to really turn

Alabama around into a competitive state.”

Jay interrupted, “Well, DUH! Surely the people voted YES to something this important. So what happened? Didn’t the governor’s plan do what it said? With the new tax system, why aren’t things better?”

“No, Son, you’re wrong,” I corrected. “The NO vote won. The big landowners and their supporters spent megabucks scaring uninformed and powerless people of the state into thinking the needed tax increases would ruin them. Even something called the Alabama Christian Coalition, which seemed to always try to support good things, came out for a NO vote—that’s when we stopped supporting them, by the way.

“Anyway, Jay, there was no tax increase, and as the governor warned, programs shut down, schools became even weaker, and Alabama, literally, became the laughing stock of the nation. No other state seemed to care less about the future of its children. Do you see now why they actually laughed at you for being from Alabama?”

Maybe we deserve the treatment we get.”

“You mean,” Shawna said, in that slow, controlled voice that shows how angry she really is, “the people of this state LIKE things this way? You mean they could have CHANGED it 20 years ago and instead they DECIDED not to? I always thought there was a REAL reason our state was such a mess, not just a bunch of stupid . . .”

“Now, take it easy, Honey,” I tried to soothe her. “It was a fair election, but, yes, two-thirds of Alabamians believed things were OK like they were, even though the state was in a horrible crisis. They just chose to believe the folks who said that somehow things could be fixed



Frank Dillard

without more taxes, and, frankly, some of them were just scared to change how things had always been. This state has a lot of wonderful people; most just didn't understand what it takes in the way of education and services to compete with Mississippi and other states."

Jay looked at me harder than I'd ever seen him. "So, Dad, Mom," his voice sounded tight, "why didn't you tell us that being from Alabama was a joke? Why didn't you try to do something. My Go—sh, I feel like my life is ruined and I've wasted the last four years."

That was the low point for me. What could I say? That the lower property taxes I'd continued to pay all these years were enough to outweigh the pitiful schools, the poor health care, the overloaded criminal investigation and social services systems, and the practically third-world conditions of some areas of the state? And that by paying the ever-higher sales taxes I hadn't really saved any taxes anyway? I just sat there hurting, for my kids and myself. I couldn't say anything.

Maureen, her eyes red, finally spoke up. "I'm so sorry, children. I don't know how you can forgive us. I knew we should have moved from Alabama after the NO vote. That's what your uncles Shawn and James did and look how well their kids are doing. That's what thousands of the brightest and best Alabamians did, just called it quits and moved away. But we figured things would change if they got bad



Caroline Hester

enough, that people would want something better for their children, that the lie of "we can do more with less" would finally lose its power.

"But we were wrong. All we got was a one-term governor, forsaken by his own party, and then other politicians with their head in the clouds, or maybe buried in the sand, and their hands in the no-tax lobbying groups' pockets. No governor since would risk doing what the state really needed after the NO's won. One governor, a couple years later, even brought back that ridiculous idea of a lottery instead of reforming taxation."

"Yeah," I found my voice at last, "a lottery that failed after 4 years. There wasn't a stable property-tax system for the lottery to build upon like in other states, and, as everybody knows, the poor and uneducated are the target of lotteries. Well, think about it, as education went further down the tubes, the work force got weaker, and fewer good jobs were available in the state, so even the lottery couldn't pay its way as the ranks of the really poor swelled. But, that's old history and isn't helping how you feel today.

"So now listen, children. Like your mother, I feel sick over what we did. It's no excuse, but I guess we let our natural optimism and 'Alabama spunkiness' blind us to the truth. We should have said what the others did: IF THE STATE VOTES NO, THEN OFF WE GO.

"It's 20 years late, but I promise you this: we'll move away from this insane, poverty-racked state as soon as we can, and you'll no longer bear the stigma of being an Alabamian. Still, since the rest of the nation will consider your Alabama educations sub par and your Alabama heritage a badge of shame, you may end up with a lesser job, Jay, and you may have to attend a lesser college, Shawna. But at least you'll have your independence from a State that WILLs to fail. And at least your own kids, should you marry and be blessed with them, won't be laughed at because of their address.

"So let's eat our ribs and make this a real independence day from a dead-end state. And for what it's worth, please know that your mother and I voted YES back on September 9, 2003."

# *My Arid Lover*

Jessica Lueders

At 4 a.m., when  
the aroma of silence still carries the midnight  
sweat that broke on our foreheads, house  
lights remain dark.

He is my cliff  
in a desert I refuse to own. Glasses fall  
to the pillow while his G.I. haircut pokes  
my cheek. Arms

like hemp braids  
around me as a smoke trail drifts from  
his mouth, blending stories he never tells  
with the air I choke on.

We rest in the bed  
still reeking with old lovers' dust. Peeling  
his layers to watch a rattler shed  
its skin, I avoid the fangs

of exes. Both leave  
scales behind. I touch them, feel their ridges.  
His stories are the desert air,  
stealing moisture

from my skin.



# Waves

Kia Powell

I rest  
at an angle  
between the cool white linoleum  
and the swishing of the dishwasher,  
my head just below the knobs and  
settings.

The house is quiet  
mired in the smell of grass  
lingering on the sticky  
summer air  
and the dishwasher's  
*shh whoosh shh*

I turn my head  
and press my ear to the warm black  
door,  
listening to the waves  
of ocean behind it.

*shh whoosh shh*

Grains of sand  
and tiny polished pebbles  
undulate  
as the waves come down  
from the whoosh  
into the shh.

*shh whoosh shh*

It grows louder—  
it is Oregon  
where the waves are rough with grit,  
where I spent my summers  
hobbling across rocky beaches  
in search of myself in tidepools.

*shh whoosh shh*

*Whoosh.*  
the waves yield  
into the drip, drip  
of the draining dishes.



David Williams



## Chapter Four

Katherine McDonald

Sixteen year-old Raven Turner stretched out her arm and stood on her toes, trying to put a used copy of the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* on a top shelf in the Golden Apples Bookstore, but because she was seven and a half months pregnant, she wasn't able to get close enough to the shelf to reach that high. The vein behind her ear began to throb, and she winced as something small and sharp inside her—the baby's arm or leg probably—scraped against her pelvic bone. That had been happening a lot in the last month. It was like getting a scratch or a bruise, except that it was different because it was so far inside, so much deeper.

She tossed the book of poetry back into the red plastic shopping basket at her feet, along with the other books the morning's customers had left scattered about the store. Raven finished shelving the ones she was able to reach, picking them up one by one, and wiping away any dust or dirt with a soft cloth sprayed with Endust. She then read each book's dedication before placing it on the shelf. This was something she'd been

doing for several weeks; in the beginning it was a way to relieve some of the boredom of shelving books, but soon it became something she felt compelled to do. Sometimes she would pretend that the dedications had been written for her and other times imagined that she had written them for someone else—someone who knew her, who knew things about her that no one else did.

The books and dedications she liked best were from the used books in the store; there was an added mystery to those since Raven never knew who they'd belonged to unless the owners had inscribed their names inside the front cover. Raven saw each dedication as a portrait, a miniature—like the pictures people put inside lockets or pocket watches—each a small picture of the life that had made *that* writer of *that* book able to write and had given him or her something to write about. It was as if the dedications could tell Raven something that the books could not. She hadn't shared her observation, her *epiphany*—a word she'd learned two years before in her sophomore English

class—with anyone, preferring to hold it inside, like her baby, both growing in the dark, deep where no one could see, but where she could feel them move.

That morning Raven had brought a small blue notebook with her to work and had started writing some of the dedications in it. It was the notebook her mother had given her one evening almost ten years before—the same night she'd left Perryton. "You should keep a diary or something in it," her mother had said. "That way when I come back, you can tell me about things and won't forget." An hour later her mother had left, but never came back; she had died in a highway accident. For a long time Raven had kept the notebook in her dresser without using it at all. Then one day during her freshman year of high school, she'd found it and had begun writing letters, poems, homework assignments, and sometimes even her thoughts in it.

But Raven had quit using the notebook last winter after the night with Clint in the field behind the school, the night the two of them had made a baby—the night her life had at once begun and ended. The last thing she'd written on the sky blue pages was about the baby. About how when she'd told Clint, he had called it an accident. He'd said it was her mistake. That had been in March, and she'd stuffed the notebook in her bottom drawer under the blue jeans that were beginning to get tight.

This morning, August 22, as she was looking for something to wear, Raven had found it again. She remembered then that she'd wanted a notebook so that she could copy down some of the dedications that she'd read. Later, as she was driving to work, Raven suddenly remembered that this was the day that she should have been starting her senior year at Perryton High School. It was almost funny that instead of homework assignments or love notes to Clint being scrawled on the pale blue pages, she'd be copying down other people's words and sentences.

After Raven finished shelving books, Millie put her to work entering data from a new shipment of books into the computer. Raven began by typing in the necessary information for each book and then read its dedication. In the last book she entered into the computer was a short dedication that read: "To the memory of my son, 1993-1994." Raven stared at the

words, reading them several times; it was as if the words and the thoughts in her head were puzzle pieces that she was trying to connect. She felt a wetness in her mouth and nose and eyes, as though everything inside her mind and heart had suddenly overflowed, and her head couldn't contain it all. Millie walked by, handing her a Kleenex. "It's just the hormones. You'll soon be back to yourself," she said in a soothing voice not unlike the one people used when talking to an upset child, Raven had thought. Clint had tried to use the same tone when he'd called last night.

He'd called just as she was falling asleep to tell her that he wouldn't be home at all that fall because he'd been given a starting position on the Mississippi State football team and would be playing a game almost every Saturday. His voice, which had been excited and boastful at first, had grown defensive when Raven began to

cry. She was remembering the Saturday eight months before in February, when she and Clint had slipped away from the Valentine's dance and had gone behind the school to Oscar Petroski's field. Raven had been showing Clint how to find the Southern Cross constellation as her mom had once taught her to do. They'd just sat down when she had suddenly leaned over and kissed him. He had kissed her back, but not like the other boys she had kissed, who were always eager, giddy, and wet—like puppies, Raven thought. Clint kissed her very slowly and casually, as if they'd been together for a long time and would be together forever, and Raven hadn't minded the small rock under her left shoulder or the blades of grass needling her back.

Last night, as she was listening to Clint's voice over the phone, all that suddenly seemed very far away—like something that had happened when she was a baby. She'd held the phone



Brian Woodham

away with one hand and had rested her free hand on her stomach where she could feel the smooth curve of the baby's head. When Raven had told Clint she wanted him to be in Perryton when the baby was born, he'd told her she was being childish and should act her age. He'd said he wasn't going to be coming back to Perryton where he was a nobody like everyone else if he could help it. Raven had hung up on him.

As she looked out the front window at the Perryton Town Hall, the Armadillo Diner, and Oscar's garage, Raven thought how before the baby everyone had said that she was all grown up, and it seemed funny and also sad to her that now that she was pregnant everyone treated her like a small child who must be dealt with and looked after. She thought maybe that was why some people thought it was so horrible—to them she was a child carrying a child and so couldn't think or feel the right things. Raven wasn't sure exactly what the right things were, but right then, looking at the words in the front of the book, "To the memory of my son, 1993-1994," her throat got very dry; she tasted something on the back of her tongue, a little like blood, and she thought that maybe that was how grown up fear tasted—like it was rising up from your heart into your throat and finally into your mouth. It was as though her body was drowning in the feeling. Then suddenly her body felt hollow, as though everything

inside her had drained out, except the baby.

Now, with one hand pressed against her stomach where she had felt the baby's kick, Raven walked to the front counter. There were no customers in the store, and she could see Millie through the front window planting marigolds in the pots on the steps that led to the bookstore's entrance. Even with the air conditioner on, the late afternoon, August sun bathed the west side of the old house and heated it like a covered dish in an oven. Raven wiped the sweat from her upper lip with the bottom edge of the blue maternity shirt that had been her mother's and that she had found while searching for her old baby clothes. It had made Raven remember the night her mother had left. She was only eight years old when it had happened, but she remembered how her mother had taken only one suitcase and a purse, promising to come back in a month and to take Raven to live with her. That night after she'd left, Raven had sat in the backyard looking at the sky. It was the first time Raven had found the Southern Cross by herself.

Of course, her mother hadn't come back in a month. It was three months later that they got the news that she had been killed when a Greyhound bus that was scheduled to be in Perryton the next morning had run off a highway somewhere near Savannah during a storm. When she was older, Raven had asked her dad why her mother had left

and where she had gone. "Look," he'd said, "your mom and I had problems. Things weren't working out. It was my fault, too." That was all he'd ever said, but once, when Raven was in the check-out line at Ennis Foods, she'd overheard two women in the next aisle talking about divorce, how shameful and sinful it was, and one of them had said, "Turner," and the other had said, "I heard she left with a man named Sean." Raven wasn't ever sure whether that meant that her mother had had an affair with this man Sean or had just gotten a ride with him, but she always wondered who Sean was, where he was going, and why he had left. It made her think about how all sorts of people left for all sorts of reasons. Then she thought of how everybody left when they died, and so really, everybody in the world both "left" and "was left" at some point in life.

Raven leaned over the front counter by the register, reading her GED study guide, but she couldn't concentrate. She picked up her purse and walked outside, telling Millie she'd be back in an hour, and walked across the street to the Armadillo Diner. It was 11:00 in the morning, almost too early for lunch, but she preferred eating before the usual Perryton lunch crowd arrived. If she came in before noon, fewer people would have to pretend they didn't recognize her. In June, Raven had begun carrying a book with her on her lunch break because the books made her forget about the other people in the diner. In



Caroline Hester

March when Raven had quit school, her English teacher, Mrs. Whitley, had given her a journal and a list: "Fifty Books Every Adult Should Read." On the inside cover of the journal Mrs. Whitley had written: "The danger of the road is not in the distance. Ten yards is far enough to break a wheel. The peril of love is not in loving too often. A single evening can leave its wound on the soul. —Meng Ciao." Raven didn't exactly understand what it meant, except that it had something to do with being on a road and with love. She figured Mrs. Whitley probably chose it because Raven was a runner on the track team and had written a paper at the beginning of the school year analyzing the kind of love that three Renaissance poets were writing about in their sonnets. Raven's plan was to finish both the GED and the book

list before the baby arrived so that she could start at the junior college in Monticello in the spring. She was scheduled to take the GED at the end of September, and she was currently on book number forty-two, *Out of Africa*.

As Raven reached the door of the diner, Deborah and Carl Richards, Clint's mother and father, walked out. For an instant the three of them looked at one another. Then the Richards looked away, as if Raven were someone they thought they recognized and then realized they didn't. Raven stood awkwardly by the door. A moment later Ada Rose, Clint's thirteen-year-old sister, ran out of the diner; she stopped when she saw Raven.

"I'll bet you're ready to have that baby," she said. "Have you decided on any names yet?"

Raven shook her head. "No, not really."

Ada Rose looked disappointed. "I wish you had. Then it's more like the baby's a real person and you can talk about it without having to call it *it*."

Carl Richards beeped the horn, and Ada Rose ran down the steps. At the bottom she turned and looked back. "Just because Clint doesn't want to be the father," she said, "does that mean he isn't? I mean, can I still be the aunt?"

"If you want to be," Raven said. "Do you want to be?"

Ada Rose looked away for a second, chewing her lower lip. Raven could see the pink lip gloss on her teeth when she faced Raven again and asked, "Do you want to be the mother?"

Raven realized then that no one had ever asked her that—everybody just assumed that she

did or she didn't. "I guess I'm the only one who doesn't really get to choose now," she said after a few moments, and Ada Rose nodded, trying to act like she understood and sympathized, Raven thought—trying to act like she was all grown up. Ada Rose waved goodbye and left.

Inside the diner, Raven could hear Marty Crocker whistling in the kitchen, but the dining room was empty, except for Ed, the Vietnam veteran, who was sitting on a stool at the counter drinking a cup of coffee through a straw and eating a biscuit. He had been a prisoner of war, kept for months in a cell no bigger, Raven had heard, than a dog's cage. He'd never been right since. His thin, graying hair was matted, and he wore a John Deere hat and khaki pants that were too big. He walked hunched over and talked to himself. It had bothered Raven until she had thought about how often she talked to herself, only just not as loud as Ed and not with other people around. Raven waved to him as she walked past. They talked to each other sometimes. He looked up and grinned, revealing pinkish brown gums and stained teeth.

Raven chose a booth at the back of the room that was far away from the door and the counter and had a tinted window so that she could look out but no one could see in. After Marty took her order, Raven opened *Out of Africa* and read: "If I know a song of Africa, I thought, of the Giraffe, and the African new moon lying on her back, of the

ploughs in the fields, and the sweaty faces of the coffee-pickers, does Africa know a song of me?" At the front of the diner, Ed got off his stool, put his Walkman on, and, turning to Raven, snapped his heels together and saluted; he marched out of the diner. "Would the air over the plain quiver with a colour that I had had on," Raven read, "or the children invent a game in which my name was, or the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or would the eagles of Ngong look out for me?" Raven closed the book. She remembered reading that Isak Dinesen had been from Denmark, but that she'd chosen Africa as her place and had made it her own, until, in a way, it had owned her.

Raven looked out the window across the street at the creek that ran alongside

Valleydale Road, cut through Earl Whatley's field, and ran past the stand of pecan trees that grew on the hill just behind the town hall. At the top of the hill Raven could see the silhouettes of the gravestones in the town cemetery. She wondered if Perryton were all she would ever know or if there was another place—an Africa—somewhere for her. She wondered whether there was a place she'd know so intimately and feel so much a part of that she'd be able to write of it the way Dinesen had about Africa. Raven was still thinking about *Out of Africa* when she left the store that afternoon, driving the old green Civic that her dad had bought used from Oscar Petroski. As Raven pulled out onto Valleydale Road, she saw Maggie Warren, the Presbyterian pastor's wife, loading trays into her van. Raven had been a member of Perryton



Amy Owen

Presbyterian, but when she had started to show, she'd dropped out of school and stopped going to church. For extra money Raven sometimes helped Maggie with the cooking and delivering for the Meals on Wheels Program which some of the church women had started several years before. Unlike a lot of the people in the church, Maggie, who didn't have children herself, didn't make Raven feel awkward or embarrassed. She'd say things to her like, "You are so lucky. Babies are a blessing." Raven didn't think any girl who was pregnant at seventeen ever felt lucky; Raven would rather have felt strong than lucky. Feeling "lucky" hadn't made much difference.

Raven drove up to the intersection of Valleydale and Moss just as the light turned red; no other cars were in sight. Waiting at a light was like waiting for grass to grow. Her father had once said that it was a good thing God didn't let folks

speed up time, or Raven would have gone through life and been in her grave in no time flat. Lately, Raven had been wishing she could go back in time or stop it all together. It was the first time in her life she'd ever not wanted the next day to come.

When she reached the driveway to her house, she paused as she did every night and looked down the road in front of her that ran straight past Winn Dixie, past Mike's Shooting Range, and continued on between fields of corn and cotton and hay until it became a point in the distance, like the point of a dagger, each side of the road representing a sharp edge of the blade, the edges narrowing until they met. Raven had never driven down the road further than Winn Dixie, but she knew it cut across the Okefenokee Swamp, led over the Florida state line, and ended at a Georgia highway somewhere south of Savannah. Someday, Raven thought, she would drive to where that point was on the

horizon. Then she turned and drove through the gate toward the small house with white vinyl siding and green shutters where she'd spent almost every night since she was born.

Above the house was the sign for her father's business: "Store-Your-Stuff," in large orange letters, and in smaller letters: "Storage Units for Rent, On-sight Guard and Manager." Directly behind the house were five rows of metal storage buildings separated into units with garage-type doors that could be unlocked and raised. The buildings were white with orange doors.

Raven parked next to her dad's green Chevy and went inside. He was on the phone in his office. He waved to Raven and mouthed the word "supper," and in the kitchen she pulled out bacon and half a carton of eggs and began to fry them. A few minutes later she heard the water running in the bathroom sink and knew that her father was washing up for church. Almost every night of the week he had somewhere to be or to go. On Mondays he went to the Lions' Club meeting; Tuesdays was choir practice; Wednesdays—which this was—was church; on Thursdays he stayed home and watched *20/20* and *ER*; and on Fridays and Saturdays he was out with Floyd Lipscomb, Marty Crocker, and Earl Whatley, either at the shooting range or the bowling alley or heading over for a drink at the Wolf Trap. Sunday evenings her father was back at church. Before Raven had started



Darren Chamlee

going out with Clint, her father had usually been home at night. Before she was pregnant, he'd go out but come home earlier.

She and her father ate dinner.

“Do you think you could run out to unit number 23 in a while?” he asked her. “Floyd was out here earlier today and he thinks he dropped his wallet.”

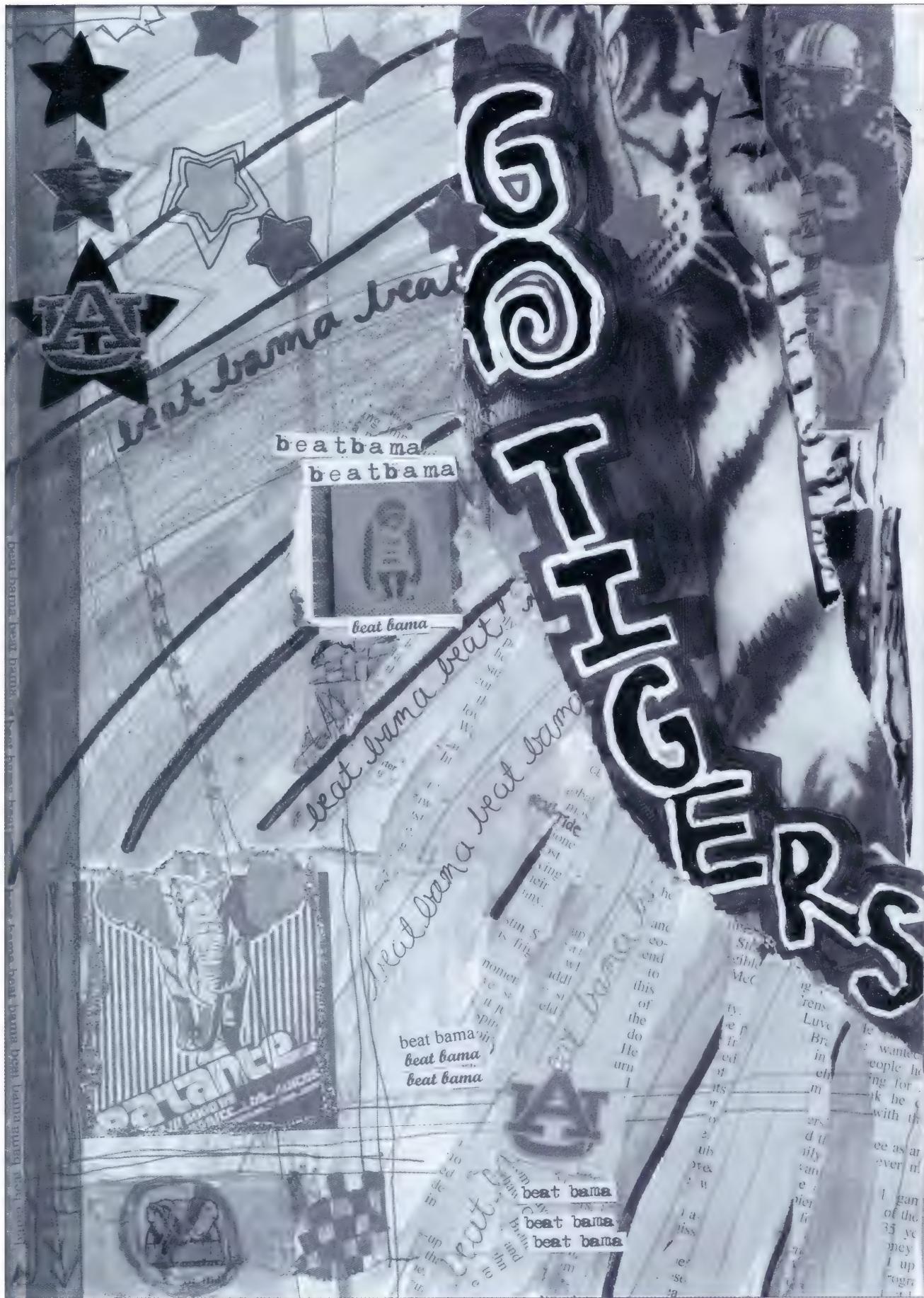
Raven nodded.

“Now be careful out there and don’t overdo it. Walk slow. Ok?”

Raven nodded again.

Then he got up, patting her shoulder. “I’ve got to go,” he said. “Tonight, first thing, the choir’s supposed to be singing ‘All People that on Earth Do Dwell.’”





Linzey Rogers

# OUR NEW LOOK

As you have flipped through the pages of this issue of *The Auburn Circle*, you have probably wondered what is going on with these bullseyes. The simple answer is that these targets are a part of the *Circle's* new look. This year the staff and I decided that the *Circle* needed some refreshing. This new look is born out of a desire to incorporate visually intriguing images into our effort to represent the talents of Auburn's students, alumni, faculty and staff. We take pride in being the forum for your creativity, and we hope that our new look will help you take pride in *The Auburn Circle*.

Kia Powell, Editor-in-Chief



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Carl Leon Ross.....Foy Union Staff  
English Department.....Liberal Arts

### ***Special note to all artists and photographers:***

Images submitted on CD or by e-mail MUST have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. This is the resolution required for printing clear images. Images with lower resolution print poorly.

If you submitted art or photography on CD or via e-mail and didn't see it in this issue, the resolution may have been too low.

To set your resolution as 300 dpi:

On a digital camera, change the setting BEFORE you take the picture. To be safe, set your digital camera to take the highest quality images. When scanning in images, set the resolution on your scanning software BEFORE you scan the image. If you aren't sure how to do this, let us help you! Give us a call at 334) 844-4122. We can also scan or digitally photograph your images for you.

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